

*. . . a village in the Midlands
And one in the Five Rivers may have the
same memories.
Let those who go home tell the same story
of you
Of action with a common purpose, action
None the less fruitful if neither you nor I
Know, until the judgement after death,
What is the fruit of action.*

T. S. ELIOT

P O E M S

FROM

I N D I A

BY

MEMBERS OF THE

FORCES

CHOSEN BY

R. N. CURREY and R. V. GIBSON



GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE

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PREFACE

ALUN LEWIS stands out as the poet of recent days who has had most that is valid to say about India. Already maturing as a writer when he was posted overseas, he subjected what he saw to the fierce and compassionate scrutiny he had learned in his Welsh mining valleys.

*Going forward on detachment in the Arakan,
Carrying the usual revolver loaded at the time,
He tripped and fell and the hammer struck a stone.
He died on a Sunday in March at eight o'clock.*

His death, the ironic triviality of which is reflected in these lines by Keidrych Rhys, was a severe public loss. Both in his poems and his short stories he spoke for the wartime soldier with an intensity of intuition that ranks him with Sidney Keyes, killed in North Africa, as one of the two finest poets of the war. We are glad to be able to include his last poem, 'The Jungle', and four others which, before the appearance of *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets*, made an impact out of all proportion to their circulation in the *Welsh Review*. The death in action of Clive Branson is another example of the unselectivity of war. Primarily an artist, he was also an opponent in prose and verse of oppression wherever he saw it. Michael Allmand, editor of a magazine of verse, and posthumously awarded a V.C. on a citation of almost

fantastic bravery, is another whose life has been cut short by war and we regret that we have so far been unable to trace any of his own poems.

But this is not, and was never intended to be, the book of one or two. Poetry is only healthy when many people are reading it with enjoyment and discrimination, and are making strongly self-critical attempts to write it themselves; and our search seems to prove that such is the case throughout this theatre of war. We have had contributions from almost every known rank from general officer to private soldier, and found work of equal merit at almost all points of the scale. The statistically-minded, turning over the pages, and tabulating contributors according to rank, might or might not be able to prove something from this; but we, reading—and often re-reading—a great many poems for each one accepted, have been impressed by the widespread awareness we have found both of the traditional forms of English poetry and of the attempts that have been made in recent years to modify those forms for the present century. Very little of the work that we have seen has been extravagantly ‘modernist’; and very little anachronistically ‘traditional’. Poets of to-day require poetry to do far more for them than their grandfathers did, but it is recognizably the same instrument. We hope our selection has in some measure reflected this.

In asking for contributions, we stated our personal bias in one respect only—that, other things being equal, we preferred poetry that reflected life in India

and Burma to nostalgic memories of home. The length of the first section, 'Indian Scene', is a measure of the response we have had; it seems that despite the limitations of living in camps and cantonments, many of those serving out here are interested in India for what it is, and not merely as a more or less reluctant provider of commercial resources, facilities for *shikar*, cheap labour, and the mysterious 'glamour' that is so much more obvious from a high and spacious bungalow than from a *basha* or tent. We have, nevertheless, included a 'Nostalgia' section, and—since the Indian Army does much of its service overseas—an 'Ex-India' section of mainly Mediterranean inspiration; while the two sections 'War' and 'Death and Memorial' deal chiefly with battle conditions on the Burma front. One short section, headed for want of a better title 'Troops', includes poems which seem to refer more directly to conditions of ordinary service life out here than to any of the other general headings. We have considered in this category a certain amount of light verse which seemed to us too second-hand in form and content to justify inclusion; original epigrammatic wit seems hard to come by.

In a book which aims at increasing understanding between British and Indian, we are glad to be able to include examples of work by Indian writers, two of whom are women. These writers can speak from 'inside' where we can only record visitors' impressions; and we make no apology for the fact that one of them, an active member of a Women's Voluntary

Corps, is, strictly speaking, a guest-artist in this Forces Anthology. She speaks with sensitive understanding of a disaster which impressed every British soldier who witnessed anything of it, but appears among British writers to have numbed rather than inspired expression.

We should have liked more poems from Indians and more from women. Also, while we have had more good poems than we could include from both the Army and the R.A.F., we have been unlucky in our efforts to tap the sources which we know to exist among naval personnel in Indian stations. In one or two cases the work of poets we should have liked to represent more fully came in so late that we have only been able to squeeze in a single poem; in several cases it came too late for us to be able to put in any at all.

Finally, in addition to the lines by Keidrych Rhys quoted above, we should like to print the following tribute to Alun Lewis by his countryman Vernon Watkins.

SONNET

ON THE DEATH OF ALUN LEWIS

*He was astonished by the abundance of gold
Light. In the street a beggar stretched her hand
Dying. Then the shudder ran through him. Once he had
planned
To out-distance the sun in a chariot. But how might he
hold
That instant, those uncurbed horses, and mix with the
mould*

*Her liquid shadow near the lotus and timeless sand?
A slighter man would have noticed the ripples expand
From the stark regenerate symbol. But to him that cold
Figure was real. Ah yes, he died in the green
Tree. What was it, then, pierced him, keen as a thorn,
And left him articulate, humble, unable to scorn
A single soul found on Earth? O, had he seen
In a flash, all India laid like Antony's queen,
Or seen the highest for which alone we are born?*

This poem shows the impact of Alun Lewis's Indian writings on a serviceman who has *not* served in this theatre. Our hope is that this collection as a whole will not only deepen the insight of men who know or have known service in India, but add also to the knowledge and sympathetic understanding of readers at home.

R. N. C.
R. V. G.

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EDITORS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS ANTHOLOGY consists of poems collected through private channels, in addition to a number which were originally entries for H.E. the Viceroy's first Verse Competition in *Army Digest*. Our hope has been, by this double line of approach, to make the collection as widely representative as possible.

The Verse Competition brought in entries from a wider field than could possibly have been reached in any other way; and we are very grateful to the Director of Army Education (India) for allowing us to make a selection from the Competition entries, after H.E. the Viceroy had made his winning selection (*To England*, KEITH WATSON, p. 74); especially as the poems included interesting work by many who had not before been in print. Meanwhile, through friendly editors, publishers, and writers, we have assembled contributions from many whose work had at least attracted the attention of a circle of discriminating readers.

Our thanks are due to all the writers who have permitted us to include work in this anthology, besides the many others who sent in work for us to see, often with useful and practical suggestions; also to the many individuals in the Directorate of Army Education who gave us valuable help and support. We should like to thank Mr. R. V. Leyden

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The lines by T. S. Eliot on the title-page are quoted from the poem 'To the Indians who died in Africa', printed in *Queen Mary's Book for India*, published by Messrs. George G. Harrap & Co.

We beg to apologize for any inadvertent omissions.

PART I
INDIAN SCENE

THE JUNGLE

I

IN mole-blue indolence the sun
Plays idly on the stagnant pool
In whose grey bed black swollen leaf
Holds Autumn rotting like an unfrocked priest.
The crocodile slides from the ochre sand
And drives the great translucent fish
Under the boughs across the running gravel.
Windfalls of brittle mast crunch as we come
To quench more than our thirst—our selves—
Beneath this bamboo bridge, this mantled pool
Where sleep exudes a sinister content
As though all strength of mind and limb must pass
And all fidelities and doubts dissolve,
The weighted world a bubble in each head,
The warm pacts of the flesh betrayed
By the nonchalance of a laugh,
The green indifference of this sleep.

II

Wandering and fortuitous the paths
We followed to this rendezvous today
Out of the mines and offices and dives,
The sidestreets of anxiety and want,
Huge cities known and distant as the stars,
Wheeling beyond our destiny and hope.

We did not notice how the accent changed
As shadows ride from precipice and plain
Closing the parks and cordoning the roads,
Clouding the humming cultures of the West—
The weekly bribe we paid the man in black,
The day shift sinking from the sun,
The blinding arc of rivets blown through steel,
The patient queues, headlines and slogans flung
Across a frightened continent, the town
Sullen and out of work, the little home
Semi-detached, suburban, transient
As fever or the anger of the old,
The best ones on some specious pretext gone.
But we who dream beside this jungle pool
Prefer the instinctive rightness of the poised
Pied kingfisher deep darting for a fish
To all the banal rectitude of states,
The dew bright diamonds on a viper's back
To the slow poison of a meaning lost
And the vituperations of the just.

III

The banyan's branching clerestories close
The noon's harsh splendour to a head of light.
The black spot in the focus grows and grows:
The vagueness of the child, the lover's deep
And inarticulate bewilderment,
The willingness to please that made a wound,
The kneeling darkness and the hungry prayer;
Cargoes of anguish in the holds of joy,
The smooth deceitful stranger in the heart,

The tangled wrack of motives drifting down
An oceanic tide of Wrong.
And though the state has enemies we know
The greater enmity within ourselves.

Some things we cleaned like knives in earth,
Kept from the dew and rust of Time
Instinctive truths and elemental love,
Knowing the force that brings the teal and quail
From Turkestan across the Himalayan snows
To Kashmir and the South alone can guide
That winging wildness home again.

Oh you who want us for ourselves,
Whose love can start the snow-rush in the woods
And melt the glacier in the dark coulisse,
Forgive this strange inconstancy of soul,
The face distorted in a jungle pool
That drowns its image in a mort of leaves.

IV

Grey monkeys gibber, ignorant and wise.
We are the ghosts, and they the denizens;
We are like them anonymous, unknown,
Avoiding what is human, near,
Skirting the villages, the paddy fields
Where boys sit timelessly to scare the crows
On bamboo platforms raised above their lives.

A trackless wilderness divides
Joy from its cause, the motive from the act:
The killing arm uncurls, strokes the soft moss;
The distant world is an obituary,
We do not hear the tappings of its dread.
The act sustains; there is no consequence.
Only aloneness, swinging slowly
Down the cold orbit of an older world
Than any they predicted in the schools,
Stirs the cold forest with a starry wind,
And sudden as the flashing of a sword
The dream exalts the bowed and golden head
And time is swept with a great turbulence,
The old temptation to remould the world.

The bamboos creak like an uneasy house;
The night is shrill with crickets, cold with space.
And if the mute pads on the sand should lift
Annihilating paws and strike us down
Then would some unimportant death resound
With the imprisoned music of the soul?
And we become the world we could not change?

Or does the will's long struggle end
With the last kindness of a foe or friend?

ALUN LEWIS
Lieutenant, South Wales Borderers

THE JOURNEY

WE were the forerunners of an army,
Going among strangers without sadness,
Danger being as natural as strangeness.

We had no other urge but to compel
Tomorrow in the image of today,
Which was motion and mileage and tinkering
When cylinders misfired and the gasket leaked.
Distance exhausted us each night;
I curled up in the darkness like a dog
And being a romantic stubbed my eyes
Upon the wheeling spokeshave of the stars.

Daylight had girls tawny as gazelles,
Beating their saris clean in pools and singing,
When we stopped they covered up their breasts;
Sometimes their gestures followed us for miles.

Then caravanserais of gipsies
With donkeys grey as mice and mincing camels
Laden with new-born lambs and trinkets,
Tentage and utensils and wicker baskets,
Following the ancient routes of the vast migrations
When history was the flight of a million birds
And poverty had splendid divagations.

Sometimes there were rivers that refused us,
Sweeping away the rafts, the oxen;
Some brown spates we breasted.
The jungle let us through with compass and machets.
And there were men like fauns, with drenched eyes,
Avoiding us, bearing arrows.

There was also the memory of Death
And the recurrent irritation of ourselves.
But the wind so wound its ways about us,
Beyond this living and this loving,
This calculation and provision, this fearing,
That neither of us heard the quiet voice calling us,
Remorse like rain softening and rotting the ground,
We felt no sorrow in the singing bird,
Forgot the sadness we had left behind.
For how could we guess, oh Life, oh suffering and
patient Life
With distance spun for ever in the mind,
We among the camels, the donkeys and the water-
falls,
How could we ever guess,
Now knowing how you pined?

ALUN LEWIS
Lieutenant, South Wales Borderers

KARANJE VILLAGE

THE sweeper said Karanje had a temple,
A roof of gold in the gaon;
But I saw only the long-nosed swine and the vultures
Groping the refuse for carrion,

And the burial cairns on the hill with its spout of
dust

Where the mules stamp and graze,
The naked children begging, the elders in poverty,
The sun's dry beat and glaze,

The crumbling hovels like a discredited fortress,
The old hags mumbling by the well,
The young girls in purple always avoiding us,
The monkeys loping obscenely round our smell—

The trees were obscene with the monkeys' grey
down-hanging,
Their long slow leaping and stare,—
The girl in a red sari despairingly swinging her
rattle,
The sacred monkeys mocking all her care.

And alone by a heap of stones in the lonely salt plain
A little Vishnu of stone,
Silently and eternally simply Being,
Bidding me come alone,

And never entirely turning me away,
But warning me still of the flesh
That catches and limes the singing birds of the soul
And holds their wings in mesh.

But the people are hard and hungry and have no
love,
Diverse and alien, uncertain in their hate,
Hard stones flung out of Creation's silent matrix,
And the Gods must wait.

And Love must wait, as the unknown yellow poppy
Whose lovely fragile petals are unfurled
Among the lizards in this wasted land.
And when my sweetheart calls me shall I tell her
That I am seeking less and less of world?
And will she understand?

ALUN LEWIS

Lieutenant, South Wales Borderers

THE MAHRATTA GHATS

THE valleys crack and burn, the exhausted plains
Sink their black teeth into the horny veins
Straggling the hills' red thighs, the bleating goats
—Dry bents and bitter thistles in their throats—
Thread the loose rocks by immemorial tracks.
Dark peasants drag the sun upon their backs.

High on the ghat the new turned soil is red,
The sun has ground it to the finest red,
It lies like gold within each horny hand.
Siva has spilt his seed upon this land.

Will she who burns and withers on the plain
Leave, ere too late, her scraggy herds of pain,
The fire of coudung and the trembling beasts,
The little wicked gods, the grinning priests,
And climb, before a thousand years have fled,
High as the eagle to her mountain bed
Whose soil is fine as flour and blood-red?

But no! She cannot move. Each arid patch
Owns the lean folk who plough and scythe and
thatch
Its grudging yield and scratch its stubborn stones,
The small gods suck the marrow from their bones.

Who is it climbs the summit of the road?
Only the beggar bumming his dark load.
Who was it cried to see the falling star?
Only the landless soldier lost in war.

And did a thousand years go by in vain?
And does another thousand start again?

ALUN LEWIS
Lieutenant, South Wales Borderers

MINUTIAE 3

I AM not your lover and you will never know me.
We do not even speak the same language.
When you pass by with a pitcher on your hip
Your steps hurry, and you look purposefully ahead,
And I concentrate on my book.

But next time you come wear the same dress, the
blue,
Fasten the same jasmine in your braided hair,
The same golden earrings and jingling anklets wear,
And the song you always stop singing when you near
me—
Please let it continue.

PAUL WIDDOWS
Company Sergeant Major, Intelligence Corps

THE EVENING OF OTHERS

MOON-CONVERTED into bone,
The perpetual boat waits by the ford;
The boatman's song, timeless, long-drawn,
Threads up the coming with the gone.

Carrying rice or pot of brass
Or a fish gleaming in the hand,
White as unruffled gliding swans,
The homeward-going figures pass.

Outside the strict, enchanted ring
Unwanted witness of the scene
I sit here in my uniform,
Ignored because of what has been.

If only one would turn aside,
Incorporate me with a glance
Into these secret purposes
And to me, lost, become a guide.

GEORGE TAYLOR
Sergeant, Royal Air Force

SUVASRA

I COULD not tell you how to find
This little place, where for a while
We stopped and I leaned out to look behind
At sun-scorched fields which sprawled for mile on
 mile;
Yet in my mind Suvasra stays.

No landscape there to stir the heart,
Instead, a tiny girl, wide-eyed,
Whose shy handwave and slow smile made me part
Of all that joy which she had stored inside;
Suvasra I shall know always.

RALPH BROOKE

Staff Sergeant, Royal Army Pay Corps

WEDDING

DOWN the street flares
Coloured the crowd, the tinsel
Garlands and white flowers,
And the bridegroom, riding alone,
Glancing so brightly and shyly—
Solemn and silver symbol—
Moved sadly and surely.
Here, flashing their blades,
Were dancers carving their silver
Rings and shining roads.
And borne on the gold salver
Of light glittered the crowd
And red-gold in the flares,
Garlands and white flowers.

HUGH SHELLEY
Captain, Intelligence Corps

WAS it chance that sewed this peasant woman's
skirt . . .
The full crimson rustling as she walks and the broad
Blue and ochre borders? Or was it just the dyes and
stuffs she had to hand,
Bought for their cheapness? Or did she with an
artistry and work
That knew so well her country and her soil, fashion
it so? . . . she who moved
Rhythmically, poisoning her rust-brown pitcher on
her head,
Or bending to dig the roots with bare fingers, broken
nails,
Her metal bracelets falling on her wrists and jangling
At her ankles . . . did she see the beauty? Did she
Starve and save and then create it so? No! But
rather as birds and squirrels
Know their colours, she knew hers . . . the redstart,
the oriole, the blue jay . . .
Knew too, like them, the setting for her dark hair
and glowing
Eyes. Knew as the soil and summer know their
colour;
Knew as the land and the fields know in their sea-
sons what to wear.

B. W. CAVE-BROWNE-CAVE
Lieutenant Colonel, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers

MINUTIAE 4

IT seems as though the war-distempered gods
Had swept into this valley, from despair,
The whole of morning:

Just for one day had set the world at odds,
Had stripped its fields of haze and gossamer
And left them yawning:

Had gathered all drifting smoke, all flight of birds,
All starts of travel, all the hopes of children,
All loves awaking,

All thoughts that beat against the wall of words,
Stumble towards sense, falter again
And fail for speaking.

PAUL WIDDOWS

Company Sergeant Major, Intelligence Corps

LAHOUL

THE air is thin and clear, tense and alive
like the taut vibrant stringing of a lute,
and the high snow-peaks
are filed to razor-edge against the sky.
Between the water-whitened rocks, the long
bars of heaped boulders and the shingle spits,
turgid with melted snow, sage-green and grey
the young river runs.
Oh no, not softly like the stripling Thames
but with a noise and such a rushing and roaring
that never is the valley silent, always
the cry of waters
always the river:
this is his valley and he made it, so
remember the river
remember the river
the Chenab.

Pale grey-green river, dark grey-green mountain
sides,
goat-grass and tumbled scree and sheer-dropped
crag;
there climbs the trackway, and oh see, oh hear
the caravan,
the mules pack-loaded,
mules all melodious with deep-throated bells,
picking and stumbling, and where from, where to?

Whether to north
across the Baralacha to Ladakh
and wall-girt Leh, or climbing through the snows
to high uncharted Zanskar, and Yarkand:
or to the populous south
through misty fir-woods on the Pir Panjal
and Kulu with its drooping deodars.

Small villages
ledged barley-fields
the hard-won harvest—
and ever the little prayer-flag-flying monasteries—
last decadence of a long corrupt belief
but where we still may see
through the thick smoky gloom of butter-lamps
and all the tawdry tinsel, and the dirt,
faintly, the austere features of the Founder,
and hear, when the demon-scaring gongs are stilled,
words that were long since spoken in the Deer-Park.

STUART PIGGOTT
Lieutenant Colonel, Intelligence Corps

BURIAL FLAGS, SIND

HERE with the desert so austere that only
Flags live, plant out your flags upon the wind,
Red tattered bannerets that mark a lonely
Grave in the sand;

A crude oblong of stone to guard some mortal
Remains against a jackal's rooting paws
Painted with colour-wash to look like marble
Through the heat-haze;

Roofed casually with corrugated iron
Held up by jutting and uneven poles;
The crooked flagpoles tied to a curved headstone
Carved with symbols—

Stars and new moon that are the only flowers
To grow out of this naked earth and sky,
Except these flags that through the windy hours
Bloom steadily,

Dull red, the faded red of women's garments
Carried on sudden camels past the sky—
Red strips of cloth that ride the dusty heavens
Untiringly.

R. N. CURREY
Major, Army Educational Corps

“ WHERE WITH NO DETOUR ’

BLARING in the sky sun marks the dust,
Counts, reckons how many million points,
Making the golden towers rear, burst
From the soil, lazy columns, and mounts
A powdered frieze along every gust
That sweeps and hovers as the earth pants.

A vulture eye turns, circles, leaning
Overhead to focus death, and seeks
To concentrate horizon with wing
A world, a life and all the rib wrecks
And memorial bones, failures lying
Dusty milestones of unfinished treks.

And there the cactus prickly defiant
Spikes the heat with green and rakes the haze
Lush livid, mounting over rock-rent
Chords staccato theme and sudden phrase
Of life in death, unyielding, unpliant,
Where with no detour converge all ways.

PATRICK TUDOR-OWEN
Leading Aircraftman, Royal Air Force

SIVA DIVINITY

SIVA divinity
Siva who destroys
Tint me a monochrome
of Hindustan.
Spread your hands
through the golden fire
Spread it on the wastes
and spread it on the land.
Siva press a toddy tree
in the wrinkles of your palm
Press it deep and store the juice
dry it grey as sleep.
In each pore
of your roasted claw engrain
First a basha then a town
then a whitewashed glistening city;
Press them down
in each pore and have no pity.
Look upon the deepsunk wells
ugly-pitting like the smallpox
all the dry and germless soil;
Now inhale them in your throat
till they lie burnt and forgotten
Like to any Norman moat
with no eyes to see the sky.
Draw the colours
draw the hues

Draw them up in one vast fire
from the ball you spin at noon.
Let the sounds die one by one
and a greyness cover all
Like a smokebred funeral pall.
Indian Siva, you destroy,
you have robbed the land of colour
Till the stones sob out their greyness
to the grass that is greyer yet.
Take my heart, oh Indian Siva,
for my heart has still some colour.
Look upon it and inhale
till it dies a monochrome.

STEPHEN FENLAUGH
Lieutenant, Royal Artillery (Field)

BAZAAR

THE dust hangs choking
The very breath of light,
Saturate, and dimming the dull kite,
The white earth soaking;
An evil and redundant dew
Draining the sun's hue,
Transmuting it to glaring white.

White is corruption,
Bone, blind eye and worm;
The dying fish's form;
White hand of deception;
Marble of the grave;
Edge of the sullen wave
Breaking through the mortifying storm.

And in the end is dust, white dust—
Destruction's blanket of silence.
Virtue and vice, peace and violence
All intimately crumbled.
On this spawning earth, dust-tumbled,
Lies here in the white bazaar
The wreckage of the world's war
In dissolution with the gods of this incense.

PAUL HULTON
Major, Army Educational Corps

AT THE BREAKING OF THE MONSOON

A BEETLE drops upon a line of verse:
‘Call on the lazy, leaden-stepping hours’
Time-blinded Milton’s do-your-worst to Time;
The clouds move up as smoothly as a hearse.
Time here calls the tune and dust of flowers
Carpets the coppered earth, and like a curse
Heat whispers abroad, blights the full prime.
In the tent flap’s frame a banyan lowers
Blossoming vultures, a carnival for death;
And Siva’s declamations fill the skies
While silent from a rock strikes out a jet
Of life, dust-vanquisher, snake. A breath
Stirs in the banyan, roisters, heaves the guys,
Turns on the page, scatters that pale wreath
Of words: ‘This eve of blackness did beget—’
Pain then, pain now and life when all life dies.

PAUL HULTON
Major, Army Educational Corps

MONSOON

CLOUDS rise like white steam from the cooler hills
And rain along their flanks is drink of Tantalus
To the miserable plain. Cumulus mounts and swells
Proudly, then mumbling melts and drifts away
Impotently, adding its moisture to the brimming air.

My flesh is rotten, spongy, and my skin
Is cobbled with sweatdrops, scraped with the shaly
rash

Of prickly heat; and all my being within
(Its taut strings slacked by dampness, frayed by men)
Has no more power for motion than the sullen air.

Night brings no ease. Even the brightest stars
Glimmer like sad sea-pearls behind the mist,
And lesser lights are stifled. No wind stirs
The thick damp felt of darkness. Insects' hum
Is the far dynamo that electrifies the air.

Oh God, send rain, rain.

Summon the mighty ocean, mount on a swift wind
The waters of the wide bay, fling them against the sun's
Fierce throne in cataracts, bring up the guns
Of thunder to smash it in tumbling towers of sound.

Let this world cease

In a cool deluge drowning consciousness;
Cover me, Lord, with the lovely oblivion of rain.

K. R. GRAY
Captain, Royal Signals

BENGAL: AFTER A STORM

SWEETLY the sky apologizes for
The epileptic interlude, the gibbering rain:
Water in pools shines out like compliments
The reconciling gestures are quite plain
Cool benedictions of the moon
Healing touch of the night air
Cancel our exile and declare
Moment and place are both a boon.
The temporary truce must not deceive;
Already the sneering bull-frog in the slime
And the appalling chorus of jackals
Betray the real intentions of the time.

GEORGE TAYLOR

Sergeant, Royal Air Force

THE INDIAN SCENE

THE railway stations in the blinding sun;
the spilling, milling, spawning, gibbering mob;
the twisted, half-mad shapes with sores that run;
the flies; the silent, huddled forms which gob
the betel-juice where they think fit; the smell;
the everlasting dogs; the beggar's whine;
the third-class multi-coloured, heaving hell;
those blatant-furtive squatting all along the line:
foul bazaars which reek and rot
and creep and crawl as day grows hot;
women who hold, with lightest grip,
plum-bloom babies at their hip;
the buffalo black—vile, padding beast—
whose back's a scurf of old, dry yeast;
the train which threads its trembling way
through god-like hills at break of day,
past fold on mighty fold of brown,
up to the snows' eternal crown;
girls with ankles jewel-hung
who use their hands to scrape up dung;
the Taj Mahal, serene and proud,
so beautiful, so white a shroud;
villages of mud and slime,
the afterbirth, forgotten, from the womb of time:
the Royal Hotel—or Cecil—the Empress—or
Green's;
the Club, cantonment and the bungalow;

the lordly ones in state; their would-be queens;
the world of the bottle, the stare, the pained
, 'hullo';
the well-kept lawns; nostalgic English flowers;
the bearers and the dhobis and the chowkidars;
the shadowed ease; the slow, unruffled hours;
those leisured, velvet evenings filled with diamond
stars.

H. H. TILLEY
Major, Army Educational Corps

CANTONMENT

HERE where the blood beats as an intermittent
clock
In the dark room of a neurasthenic, each day
Barely pinning the avalanche, tomorrow cracking
the rock

Of certainty, I observe the smooth and ordered lives
Of dachshunds, pale confident children playing
In strict approaches, sanitary ambitious wives

Holding indecorous inquest on the empty husks
Of desire, deferring death more urgently than the
men
Who wrote brief letters, secretly hoarding their
meagre dusks

Till they finished cursorily in a muddy citadel
With the rain in their eyes, prerogative of exiles.
Forced to consider logic as a fallen angel,

Discreet hired mourner at this dusty monument
To the oblique ones, I watch time lift a predatory
wing,
A crow scattering the last charred leaf, carrion
intent.

FRANCIS GARNELL
Lieutenant Colonel, Army Educational Corps

PURDAH WOMEN

You have my verdict in my tourist stare,
You nightmare women, each a ghost
Of the bazaar's gay carnival; the badge you bear
Makes of me a quick antagonist
Of the sunlit morning; this grey parade
Of hooded furniture, of dreadful toys
Publishes ugliness; your grim charade
Spelling history's wrong twist, the invalid choice
Of etiolated lips, the dead mind, eyes
Fugitive from casual praise, grace lost to the sun,
Leads to this neutral end, meek effigies
Advertising fury of possession.

FRANCIS CARNELL
Lieutenant Colonel, Army Educational Corps

MOKOMEH GHAT

IN the cool shade by the communal pump
The old men sat all day
Chewing betel or sleeping:
To them the cynical parody
The monkeys played among the mocking branches
Was not in the least disconcerting.

It was only in the early evening
As the women came in a long slim line
To draw water from the reluctant handle,
The tin-tin of bangles on their feet,
That the weariness of centuries became apparent.

J. C. H. MOLLISON
Sergeant, Intelligence Corps (Field Security)

IN the distraction of the day, what tiny movements
do I miss?
... The glance of eyes, the tone of voice, the meaning
of the thought
That lies behind? Who knows? All these fragments
... this
Or that ... life's weavings on the loom? Here is this
shawl I bought;
Old Kashmiri work they tell me; forty years or more;
dull blue and scarlet.
What craft! What work is there! Why, in a single
stitched
And curving pattern, there is a full history of living
... let
Alone pricked fingers! And a few poor months'
living snatched
At or lost in the artistry of the salesman and the price
it made,
And now it lies across my knee: a token of a life
I cannot even picture, because I never knew. Who
sewed
And who conceived this artistry, squatting cross-
legged on the floor? What strife,
What memory? What dust-frayed clothes they wore?
What did they talk of, what did they say,
Sitting and stitching. . . . Watching the firewood
ember that they'd gathered yesterday?

B. W. CAVE-BROWNE-CAVE
Lieutenant Colonel, Royal Northumberland Fusiliers

From MEN AND GODS,
SOUTH INDIA

(ii) *Temple*

Gods overhang this land like tropical trees;
Their numerous arms are branches, their hands
hold

For jewelled flowers and fruit objects of gold,
Silver and stone; their metamorphoses
Are baffling as the dappled processes
Of cobras among aloes, pythons curled
Round nameless animals, huge elephants hurled
Through mottled leaves by dark ferocities.

The walls are tiger-striped; the colonnades,
Alive with parakeets, are overgrown
With tropical luxuriance of carved stone;
The trails of individual deities
Their incarnations and strange ecstasies
Are easily lost in jungle lights and shades.

(iii) *Siva*

Siva the Destroyer, God of Death
And springing reproduction, Sundeswar
The Beautiful, the boy Bikshatanar,
Seducer of the chaste wives of the sages,
And Nataraja, dancer of the ages,
The dancer with a hundred thousand poses,
The Dancer on the Elephant, all these guises
Great Siva's name and shape changed in a breath.

Vrishabavanamoorthi, on his Bull,
Parvati by his side, and he and she
Siva himself, woman and man in one;
While from the lingam carved beside the throne
Brahma dives to the depths and Vishnu flies
To find the end of this infinity.

(v) *Kali**

O Kali, exquisite dancer, once a year,
When ghee and flowers and the burnt oils fail,
Dance Siva's dance of death; great goddess fill
Your wide, dilating pupils with austere
And bloodless images of death, and wear
For floral garlanding the smooth plain coil
Of seamless silken cloth that does not spill
A drop of blood. . . . This was a traveller
Who shuddered once and died without a groan,
His neck marked only by the sacred line,
The delicate symbol of eternity . . .
O hideous modesty that cannot bear
To show the lips of shame, and dare not see
The lips of wounds that murmur cruelty!

(vi) *Menakshi†*

Here in this shrieking place of parakeets
Menakshi lives, goddess with fish's eyes,
That only have to glance to fertilize;
Rati (or is it Leda?) rides her swan,
Goddess of Love; her pretty handmaid sits

* Kali, wife of Siva, was the goddess of the thugs.

† Menakshi, wife of Siva, goddess of fertility.

Behind her on its tail; huge lions prance
Around Drowpathi, wife of five at once—
Look down, Menakshi, on the sleeping spawn!.

Siva comes every evening to her shrine
On his high palanquin; his bearers run
Urgently through the collonades; tall flares
Sweep past, and fans, and shelters from the sun—
That never came in here; a curl'd conch blares—
Look down, Menakshi, on the thronging spawn!

(ix) *Hindu Women*

Beneath these lusting gods what feminine grace!
Women with vessels held against full breasts,
Walking with queen-like carriage to the place
Where a whole street draws water, hands and wrists
Moved carelessly to touch the sleek black hair
Or raise a heavy vessel to the head;
Wearing their single garment with an air
Of swaying gracefulness I once thought dead.

They have not learned the rhythm of pointed heels,
Their sandalled feet are gravely innocent
Of time as measured by revolving wheels;
They touch their palms in greeting, lift cupped hands
And liquid eyes for gifts, not diffident
In raising both in prayer to these gross gods.

R. N. CURREY
Major, Army Educational Corps

MILKY RONDO

BABURAM's daughter laughed in the street
When she saw an old man shake his beard
And strike his wife with a sugar-cane.

'Your daughter laughed in the street', they said.

He blew his nostrils wide
And called the holy priest.
'Forgive my daughter, God,
She laughed in the street.'

'Men must do good deeds and think good thoughts
And a woman must never laugh in the street'
Muttered the holy priest; 'a good man shuns
Bright colours and drinks boiled milk with carda-
moms;

Her wicked soul we must destroy—so marry her
To a man who bathes daily before dawn
And drinks hot milk before his prayers.
Our ancient glory will return indeed
When men's good deeds have buried for ever
The smiles of beautiful flippant women.
A sweet husband should drink boiled milk
And beat his wife with a sugar-cane if she smiles;
A wise husband should hang his wife by her hair
If she swings her legs and walks too fast—
God save our land from shameless women.'

MADAN LAL OBROI
Captain, 1st Punjab Regiment

EPITAPH ON A SWEEPER

MONOTONOUS, yes. Degrading, perhaps. But still
He has, for what it's worth, a cast-iron defence,
Who passed his whole God-given existence,
Emptying the faeces of sahibs, until
Death eventually rewarded his diligence.

At least he can claim in Nirvana without pretence
That his life was dedicated to the Fundamental.

PAUL WIDDOWS

Company Sergeant Major, Intelligence Corps

AGRA, NOVEMBER 1944

THE Moghuls planned both life and death: these
walls
Of sculptured marble and red sandstone rise
In affirmation of the worth they laid
On dignity and grace and spaciousness.
Their lifetime's living glory built great halls,
In jewelled state enthroned to sit, all-wise,
Among the passive people—they who weighed
With agony and tears such graciousness;
And poured out treasure for their dead, whose palls
These great and shapely marble domes, in size
And symmetry unmatched. But those who paid
In pain to prove the huge fallaciousness
Of love imprisoned in such noble stone—
Is no dark stain across the image thrown?

REG. LEVY

Sergeant, Royal Army Pay Corps

TAJ MAHAL BY MOONLIGHT

ENCHANTED by your marble magic, we
Sat tailor-wise upon a minaret
And gazed towards the moonlight-shrouded dome,
While far below the shrunken Jumna gleamed.

In that place of wonder we paid homage
And talked together with no race or creed
To sunder us; and yet while we conversed
There sat a crippled beggar at the gate.

Children lay hungry in their mud-built huts,
And war was waging over all the earth,
And rocket bombs fell on the ones we loved:
We came to see the wonder of the world.

RALPH BROOKE
Sergeant, Royal Army Pay Corps

EURASIA

ONE time I knew their home: the yellow stair;
White walls; the windows where the yellow
flower

Brightens the dust in the autumnal rains
That streaked the step and stain the summer stone.

The flowering girls paled the sunlight,
Fount ablaze where laughter died.
Cloud and the clock are stamping out
Nights from days.

Born to the momentary sun;
Robbed at night, they caught the stars.
Cloud and the clock are counting out
The leaves of light.

Before this evening sky, the birds
Wheel and weave world-wide.
Clouds and clocks encase the hours.
The girls grieve.

HUGH SHELLEY
Captain, Intelligence Corps

BEGGAR, YOUNG MOTHER *

A STRANGE god, in the dark hate
Of rising storm.
This in the cold. And out beyond
The flare of summer leaf
And the shaken bloom.

Here is fine flame in the lock
Of the door; in the stone:
The silent god. And the red
Is dry, for the sap quenched
In shadow of bone.

The garments' folds
Hold no thing but power
To bear richer flower
Than the tree's rose.

HUGH SHELLEY
Captain, Intelligence Corps

THE PEASANTS

THE dwarf barefooted, chanting
Behind the oxen by the lake,
Stepping lightly and lazily among the thorn-trees
Dusky and dazed with sunlight, half awake;

The women breaking stones upon the highway,
Walking erect with burdens on their heads,
One body growing in another body,
Creation touching verminous straw beds.

Across scorched hills and trampled crops
The soldiers straggle by,
History staggers in their wake.
The peasants watch them die.

ALUN LEWIS

Lieutenant, South Wales Borderers

PEASANT GIRLS

THESE girls
are like the slow-eyed bullocks,
eyes
Narrowly slotted
as the bamboo rods
Matting my kallibou.
These girls
Are dry and arid
like the dust on the plains
Kissed by the monsoon-rain delivered sun.
These girls
like the polyangled roadside flowers
Fade into backgrounds of tar, of cement.
These girls
are like the stale statistics
of an Indian famine
Vital once, somewhere, to some heart,
A page of print now that spurs not,
stirs us no ripples in the mind.
Oh my love for ripe fulness and laughter
in girls that are English.

STEPHEN FENLAUGH
Lieutenant, Royal Artillery (Field)

THE SICKLE MOON

(Based on the Bengali of Bishnu De)

LOOK, love, at the moon: a sickle in the sky—
Rising, our moon ought to be sickle-shaped!
Pile flower on flower to hide our sordid plight;
Shed beauty's light on my bare roof, where high
The gentle wind will dry our burning sweat
And waft us on a sea of pale moonlight.

What should we fear? I recognize no fears
Let us go up, slowly and hand in hand—
On the road to peace chasms have always gaped,
And the guests of joy must thither wade though
tears—
Look, look at the moon; a sickle in the sky—
Our rising moon ought to be sickle shaped!

Sorrowful men strike blindly out at dreams,
But the world's end and their real ache are far.
Let tyrants trample on the human sand,
Torpedoes plough the blue deep ocean stream—
Here today, away tomorrow, let me laugh;
For like cash to spend, I have today in hand:

The air will shed no bombs on us today;
We may be poor; yet life resides in us.
Our lords and masters profit by our rape;
Gangsters and salesmen undermine our way:

Their greed makes the air stink; our mouths taste
death—

So our moon, rising, has a sickle's shape!

No myth-bound hero in a pious tale,

I praise the downfall of establishment.

The stubble burns away: siren-sounds die:

Dismay hides the oppressor like a veil.

Love beating like a hammer in my heart!—The
moon

Rising athwart, a sickle in our sky!

J. O. BARTLEY

Major, General Staff

BENGAL FAMINE, 1943

'We must conclude that about 1·5 million deaths occurred as a direct result of the [Bengal] famine and the epidemics which followed in its train.' *Famine Inquiry Commission Report on Bengal.*

I

CITIES paved with bones
And dying hands . . .
Pass them by.
Leave them in their rags.

Who is the microscopic I
Who can defy such death
Such desolation?

See her with cracking breasts,
Ancient face mirrored in ancient eyes beneath:
Mouthing at the air;
The empty air.
See death with her tired stare . . .
Death everywhere.

Who am I?
The microscopic I,
In all this desolation and despair?
Eat while I can
For there are others there,
Hanging from breasts long dried,
Hanging from hope that died.

Remember, remember things long gone
Into the swelling river,
Brown-bodied river,

Where the suicide
And all his near ones
Left naught but footprints in the clay.
Remember this day!
Remember the hunger if you can.
But it fades away
Like the dream of rice,
And the fire in the brain
Is stoked with spice
Whirling with a million noonday suns.
Today or yesterday?
What matter.

‘Rice water’ he asked,
‘Only water from the rice, no more.
Keep the light white grains to feed your wife,
Plump, golden wife,
Shuddering behind her sacks of hoarded grain.
Keep it.
Give me the water to revive
The vision through the pain:
The clean hearth and copper vessels,
And paddy lush with rain
Growing like sons.
Revive this vision. . . .
Make me forget the angry belly
The sons turned bone and ash upon the wind,
The empty farmstead
And the scattered kin.’

Snatch at the empty air,
And hold up palms for succour.
None, none shall receive alms.
None but those who hear bells jangling,
And the muezzin call
Echoing endless in the brain.

Wash brother,
Wash your soul in the fishless river.
See Brahma, Allah, God
As your soul glides slowly away.
Remember you are nothing brother. . . .
Not even clay.
So fill the river and despoil the earth.

The vulture hovers mighty on the wing,
Searching the waving rice for the corpse of
Spring.

II

WE asked for grain. . . .
The bellied clouds gave rain.
We asked for grain. . . .
The fields were strewn with sheaves.
And saffron flowers suppliant before the shrine,
Gave us our sons,
And our son's sons. . . .

The road to the city is hard.
The city is hard with shut doors.
The stone walks of the city burn our feet.

We do not understand.
We do not understand shut doors
And people passing heedless in the street.
Above all we do not understand
Why we hunger,
Why our homesteads lie deserted,
Our fields fallow.

We do not understand why saffron flowers
 before the shrine
Lie dead,
As our sons lie dead along the way.
Along the road to the city.
We do not understand,
Why only death has pity.
Death is all that remains,
The only harvest for what we sowed.
We do not understand
Why only death should be our harvest.

TARA ALI BAIG
Bombay Women's Service

POLICE REPORT

REPORTED: One o'clock, Track Eight,
Woman, near-naked, lying flat
Had been dead five hours.

Lightly she lay as a fallen cone
On the cold stone.

Item: one corpse, weight sixty pounds.
(Why will they trespass in private grounds?)
Cause of death, hunger.

Back to the chawls where low life eddies
To wait for bodies.

Effects: one hobble-stick, value nil,
(It cannot pay for her funeral.)
Guide, witness, mourner
To one performer.

O! the level paddy,
The water and the buffalo;
See, she lies dead, my scarecrow
Guarding the light-green paddy
On the black stone.

R. V. GIBSON
Major, Army Educational Corps

UNCONSIDERED BODIES

Newspapers tabulate
Daily deaths;
But who cares a damn about
Passings of paupers?

Unconsidered bodies
Float down the tide
Of holy rivers;
Down the Ganges

With hunched shoulders
Past Benares' steps;
Godavery, Cauvery,
The River Kistna.

To-day I found
Under a dam,
Dedicate to Allah,
Blessed by Vishnu,

Serving provinces
With light and water,
A broken body
Stretched across a rock.

Coolies working near
Saw, but ignored it—
Nobody wanted it
Even for record.

R. N. CURREY
Major, Army Educational Corps

AUX INDES

THE brazen dome
In molten drops
Enslaves mankind
And kills his crops.

The humid earth
With sweating veins
From leaden skies
Licks monsoon rains.

The wretched dens
In silence, speak.
Their wattled walls
A vengeance wreak.

The outstretched hand
Of mute request
Condemns the soul
Who yet can rest.

*A qui la gloire
A qui la honte?
N'oubliez pas
Faut rendre compte!*

D. GRAY

Lieutenant, Royal Army Medical Corps

TO INDIA

I DO not claim thee as mine own
When loud the stranger world applauds thy
mystery;
The lure intangible, the hidden power
That draw men to thee in the frightened hour
Of fading life. For these I love thee not.
Alas! I know thee not.

But when the stranger looks aghast at thee,
At filth and hunger, crying poverty,
When stunned with sight of endless sluggishness
He turns away in civilized dismay—
Ah then! I know thee as thou art—
A woman plunged in misery: an anguished heart,
An aching body rent today with cry
Of starving hollowness.
Then to retreating worlds let me proclaim
That I am thine and that I bear thy name.

MURIEL WASI

*Junior Commander,
Women's Auxiliary Corps (India)*

PART II

NOSTALGIA

POEM

To walk back into love,
Into that summer garden where the heart
Opened as flowers. . . .

.

Eyes in the dead of night
Waking from sleep will stare and slowly search
Their lost surroundings,

Knobs, table, washstand
Outlined adrift in darkness; no direction,
No known perspective,

Till sense of place returns,
Window and doorway the familiar marks
Taking alignment.

To wake back into love
Would be as dubious and as bewildered,
As known and certain.

PAUL WIDDOWS
Company Sergeant Major, Intelligence Corps

JANUARY IN DELHI

THIS is no Indian day, with thick white mist
Silently clinging, cold and wet with half-rain:
how they complain
Those shrill green birds hid in the trees!
Without the hard bright sun, how strange now look
The mosques with their bulbous domes
and the fretted tomb
Hunched and resentful of this alien gloom,
conspiring to resist
This English winter envelope of cloud.
This is good Gothic weather: on these days
The village churches stand under dripping elms
in flat-washed greys.
Inside, there's smell of lamp-oil, ancient wood,
Damp stone and worn-out hassocks; underfoot
The brasses loose in their stone settings
make a dull clank
Beneath the coconut matting. Outside, rank
Grave-grass caresses the skeleton with its root.
This is the cold grey time for old grey things:
The menhir on the moor or the stone-chambered
grave—
a haunted cave
On the bleak Cotswold hill-top, where the Severn
Gleams faintly silver away below in the woods.
No sound, save
The regular ooze and drip of water

Snail-tracking down the lichened walls,
Splashing upon the floor of wet red clay.
This is the weather for wood-fires; down in the pub
The little bar is full of flickering heat—
 with mud-caked feet
And cheerful blue of faded dungarees
The ploughboy sips his beer, warmed on the hob.
 Books and quiet talk
For me at home after the late afternoon's walk.
So was it once, now lie the years between.
 When sounds retreat
From madness back to sanity and love?
For how long must I walk the stricken grove?

STUART PIGGOTT
Lieutenant Colonel, Intelligence Corps

WINTER EVENING

THE thick feathery snow ceased at last to
Billow down upon the wintry scene, and the
Train squealed to a shuddering halt.
The stuffiness was blasted by crystal air;
And a few gossamer flakes settled on me
As I stepped on the tiny deserted platform.
A door or two banged; a shriek of whistle;
Sparks; the wheels spun and slipped,
Gripped, and the black snake slid away and
A red eye closed round the bend.

The collector blew his fingers and said:
'Cold snap again' as I passed the wicket
And crunched down the lane—comfortable
Sound. Stark beauty yet more lovely in
Snow. Layers of spotless virgin snow.
Sagging wires. Hedges drawn with dainty
Tracery. Each tree a song of joy.

Happy shouts of kiddies exulting on a slide.
Cheeks whipped red with tonic air.
Visions of boiled eggs; new bread thick with
Butter, and fragrant tea, danced through my
Mind and my pace quickened. The pond near the
Chapel had frozen and caught new beauty.
Harder; pagan; more satisfying than summer's
Calm.

The signpost at the corner dropped more than
Usual. Swollen to twice its size, names ice-
Erased. The pub shedding ruddy flickers through
The leaded panes. Staining the soft drifts.
Promising winter's own comfort—fire.

My garden a small pale sea. My forlorn rose-
Bushes marooned like tiny islets. In ten
Minutes the soft whispering of kettle, tea,
And complete satisfaction.

R. ROLING
Signalman, Royal Signals

LETTER TO ERIF DER

OUR kisses grow like flowers in the wilderness
When the eye, erring from its chosen path,
follows

Their flares into the dark recesses of
Enchanted vales. They are cast like stars
And grow not in the garden's order
Of repeated design.

Our kisses are like the red anemones of Greece,
The first to greet the Arcadian Spring,
Scattered in luminous scarlet over
The grey monotony of rock, with the knowledge
Of that incredible sky overhead and the smell of
the sea
Wafted over the hills, in the air.

Our kisses are not premeditated nor full of intent,
Neither casual like the frivolous snapping
Of a flowering spray, but conscious of life
And the urge to be and the oneness of being
Which Time grudgingly gives only to minutes,
Short pulses of our lives.

A single flower bursting from a swelling bud
Holds no promise of the future, no guarantee
Of another spring, no assurance of repeated bloom.
It knows not where its pollen will be carried
Nor where its seed will fall.

My love is not complacent, has not grown blunt
In the security of conquest, nor lost its urge
In the easy continuity of consent; it senses
In blissful hours, like dropping petals,
The certain knowledge of its end.

This intensity of love has changed
Silent hours with you into singing years,
Has anticipated in short, furtive embraces
The unborn passions of living days
Not belonging to us.

My love knows no limits but those set by you
And asks no questions nor demands a price;
Even under the shadow of resignation
Vanquishing pain, seeks you, unreachable and
Ever beautiful, ever good.

R. V. LEYDEN

Lance Corporal, Auxiliary Force, India

TO O

PLATO thought passion purposeless
And Paul said much the same,
But Paul was sure the World would end,
Yet Doomsday never came
To end this first existence, which
Beauty and Love inflame.

Son of the passion of a race
Who loved, and wived, and bred
In open spite of everything
Philosophers have said,
Why should the thoughts of Paul and Plato
Trouble and vex my head?

My lady's lips are wiser
Than Plato was or Paul,
Whose plans for human dignity
Were too unnatural;
In them, and not in books, there lives
The strongest truth of all.

E. L. BLACK
Flight Lieutenant, Royal Air Force

CHILDREN WAKING—
HILL STATION

LIKE birds, when first light breaks,
One of them stirs, and speaks;
The other, drowsily,
Makes some reply.

I cannot, where I lie,
Make out their commentary,
But chuckling word on word
Tells their accord.

Their brittle flow of words
Echoes the chirp of birds;
Without proviso they
Accept the day;

While their half-chant has thrown
My mind back to my own
Two boys who laugh and play
War-years away;

Whose morning orisons
Used to awake me once,
Prelude to culmination
In invasion—

Their barefoot *blitzkrieg*—we
Were buried helplessly
Beneath the rosy flood
Of flesh-and-blood.

While one dive-bombed the sheet,
The other mined my feet,
And both drove clutching tanks
Across my flanks.

Checked at this point, they
Might for a moment stay
Quiet beneath some stale,
Time-serving tale;

But their bridge-head was won,
And our resistance done;
We must accept, as they,
The coming day!

R. N. CURREY
Major, Army Educational Corps

GEORGIA IN MY MIND

How many died believing
Their winedark lady lay
Behind the gorges in the lost valley?
Yet had they lived not grieving
That she should be unkind,
Nor found her features tally
With their dismay.
I fear to find
How I have Georgia Georgia in my mind.

Leagued with the ghosts of ghosts
And old forgotten causes
They stood in the outflanked pass, at the bought
town;
As if forfeit of lusts,
As if a death could bind
Her false her fair renown
With iron clauses:
So I grow blind
To see fair Georgia Georgia in my mind.

Truth from her deep well
Lays hands on all her hallows.
After the sun falls out of heaven and the moons
Drop apart, the cool
Pool of evening lined
With quiet wraps the pines

And in its shallows
The small roads wind
That bring sweet Georgia Georgia in my mind.

For all who fall sequestered
Beyond desire or dream,
Beyond promise or prayer among the mountains,
Who saw as the tired sun westered
Their own land fall behind,
Let the icecap's fountains
Sing requiem;
For all who find
How they have Georgia Georgia in their mind.

H. L. SHORTO
Captain, Intelligence Corps

TWO MEN

ECCLESIASTES spoke: Draw down a blind
Upon the past; the joy of home, a life
Of loving and the dreams put far behind.
Forget you ever stood with her called wife
And marvelled at the beauty of a child
Before she clutched her dolls in sleep. Be wise;
Accept the here and now. Shut out those wild
Rememberings, for therein madness lies.

He could not understand the disbelief
Of shaken head, his boorish, chill reward.
He little knew that once against my grief
I built a sure defence of black-out board
Across the mind; that if, poor fool, I had
Not thrown it down I should indeed go mad.

H. H. TILLEY
Major, Army Educational Corps

NOSTALGIA

(Lines written in the Political Agent's Garden, Minanshah, North Waziristan)

MOCKERY of spring, this airborne fragrance,
of English flowers,
this elegance
of conifers and rose-leaved bowers.

Green lawn, exceptional, no prospect fills;
beyond, the wilderness
and beyond the wilderness,
the hills,
the final crags where life is still primeval,
the shot, the indrawn breath,
the sudden death,
the gangster law where blood-feud is no evil.
But here is peace, an oasis of peace,
sweet scent
of new-cut turf
and dreams of other days and happiness,
almond blossom, marigolds, a fragrant land;
but, dreams are vain!
Hear that strain—
atonal, barbarous rhythms of the Tochi band.

A. J. GILLIVER
Sergeant, Royal Signals

CAMP, INDAINGGYI

A MUMBLING lorry hisses through the mud
tracks in the trampled grasses where the night
is thickening the branches of the wood.

Cicadas spin thin coils of wiring sound.
Beneath the boughs, pricked out like tongues of light
the voices flicker, swing the lanterns round.

Here, a guitar and bucking waves of song,
and spattered laughter burrowing the mound
of dark. And our nostalgic voices throng

a labyrinth of streets and country lanes
of England strung about these tents along
the trees, and crowd a city's flaring panes;

the white cascade of light on roaring bus;
the marble, brass and glasses bottles stain
amber and gold, while, here, the acid stars

point our horizons: fold on fold of grey-
green hills. In valley jungle winds the far
dust-white or mud-brown road to Mandalay.

HUGH SHELLEY
Captain, Intelligence Corps

TO ENGLAND

I SHALL come back,
Find you bescarred, and yet more holy,
Laid low in dust,
More proud than lowly.
I shall come back,
And see again the clover and the rose
Blooming anew, and bending to each summer wind
that blows.
And, being back, shall find again,
When war is over,
The gates of Heaven are but the cliffs of Dover.

KEITH WATSON
Corporal, Royal Air Force

SONNET FOR THE MADONNA'
OF THE CHERRIES

DEAR Lady of the Cherries, cool, serene,
Untroubled by our follies, strife and fears,
Clad in soft reds and blues and mantle green,
Your memory has been with me all these years.

Long years of battle, bitterness and waste,
Dry years of sun and dust and Eastern skies,
Hard years of ceaseless struggle, endless haste,
Fighting 'gainst greed for power and hate and lies.

Your red-gold hair, your slowly smiling face
For pride in your dear son, your King of Kings,
Fruits of the kindly earth, and truth and grace,
Colour and light, and all warm lovely things—

For all that loveliness, that warmth, that light,
Blessed Madonna, I go back to fight.

ARCHIBALD WAVELL
Field Marshal

PART III

EX-INDIA

FOR PAUL THE DEACON—
MONTE CASSINO, A.D. 790

AND was it then so dark, your age,
did the lamp burn so low
then but eight centuries after
that strange death on the lonely hill-top,
death of a vanquished man but
birth of a conquering godhead?
Was it then so slow
the quickening spirit of grace
did the foe
show his barbarian face
so terribly, so unrelentingly
then as now?

We have turned to a sad smirched page
of civilization's manuscript—the scribe
falters, his unclean quill
is plucked from the vulture,
writes with the blood of carnage
stinks of battlefield sepulture;
and yet still
still over the long destructive centuries
echo Alcuin's words to you at Monte Cassino:
est nam certa quies fessis venientibus illuc
hic olus hospitibus, piscis hic, panis abundans—

Christ's peace and the loaves and the fishes,
rest for the weary and food
for the burdened and heavy laden
and the love of man for all men
so was it then.

But now the guns roar and spit across the ravished
vineyards,
now is the age most dark:
the well-loved roof-tree of Benedict desecrated,
our time's unlovely skeleton stripped stark.
The sky clouds to the twilight of mankind,
pity's eclipse, and the terrifying kingdom of the
blind.

STUART PIGGOTT
Lieutenant Colonel, Intelligence Corps

MANIFESTO OF THE DROWNED SAILORS

LONG, long before your wars,
When ships were wooden and seafaring perilous
We were drowned here hard by the Clashing Rocks.

Obviously we were not torpedoed,
Nor to the contemporary equivalent owed
We our death. It is with pity we look

And despair at the many lives
Cut short, the machine-gunning of survivors
Above us; they had plans for the future.

No, no. Our death had a feature
Quite singular. We were drowned by beauty.
No pride of seamanship, no sense of responsibility

Counted for anything in that compulsion,
That unearthly and never-to-be-repeated wonder
The Sirens' singing. To live would have been to
wander

Crazed and insatiable, in revulsion
From the humdrum and trivial, the threadbare con-
tentments
That serve the visionless for a life's achievement;

Crazed and insatiable, having met
Loveliness face to face, in perpetual search
For an ideal always a horizon out of reach.

We would die again, willingly die: for what
Even after sound sight action thought sensation
could ever mount
To a moment's value ever would not disappoint?

And of all who have come to the cold grave hap-
hazardly
One man we despise, one only: for he
Knew what we know, and remained content to be
A pedlar of strange yarns; content to see
What we saw and desert it; content eventually
With routine domestic bliss, and stretching inter-
minably
Towards it routine jobs on the routine sea.

PAUL WIDDOWS

Company Sergeant Major, Intelligence Corps

TROOP SHIP

THE bunks are crowded:
 khaki is turning in.
Not a fag that glows in the dusk;
War-time forbids it
 and war
Says not to much else.
 There's a rag
Of a sky on the sea, and the waves will not speak
 tonight.
There are lights
 feverdim
 shining on blanket and bunk.
Overhead
 the funnel mourns
 and a tunnel
Of black creeps in from the west.
There is laughter from a cabin
 and just after a song,
A night song, good night to all,
 from the messroom piano,
And a uniform leaning on rails
 that hears not the laughter or song.

STEPHEN FENLAUGH
Lieutenant, Royal Artillery (Field)

CONFESSION:
CLEOPATRA TO IRAS

HE who enters the gate
Of my voluptuous sense
Needs to be both great
And unmasked of pretence.

The leman of strong kings
Dotes on no beardless boy;
Who to my senses sings
Must voice without alloy.

My spirit he must melt
Who would my body win.
I know how Love is spelt—
The way that priests spell Sin;

And accents bitter-sweet
Are those upon my tongue
When, welcoming, I greet
My Taurus, garland-hung.

My conqueror never comes
And so: 'The next!' I cry.
(A voluptuary never numbs
Until she comes to die.)

Ah, that God, where is he
Who can Cleopatra quell
And raise prostrate divinity
From the floor of its hell?

My passionate bed lies wide
And white beneath the stars;
And who is it sleeps at my side?
The ageing Latin Mars,

Caesar, a God to Rome,
But scarce a God to me!
When will my conqueror come?
And when shall I be free?

He who enters the gate
Of my voluptuous sense
Needs to be more than great,
Needs—to have innocence!

JOHN GAWSWORTH
Sergeant, Royal Air Force

ARABIA

MILES of gray-tan earth
Knotted into buttes;
Hazy with wind-lifted sand.
No green ribbons of fast flowing rivers
In this arid desolation:
No grass waving; no trees for shade.
Only the infinite and eternal emptiness
Of deserted horizons.
Only the columns of Palmyra, or the sand-strewn
 mounds
Which mark the site of ancient Babylon
Give promise of an old prosperity—
But they are dead,
And only the shifting sands remain,
To mock man's efforts to conquer
Their inviolate power:
Even the canals of Nebuchadnezzar
Have filled in for ever.
In the Nefud lie the bones of adventurers
Who sought to conquer these unlimited spaces,
Where nothing lived but the winds of heaven
And these eternal and malevolent sands.
Men's hopes, and the mute stones of their civiliza-
 tions,
Lie beneath these ever-moving hills;

And the cold eastern stars look down
Upon the deathless wastes,
Where no bird sings
And where there is no music, save the sigh
Of the night breeze in wild and solitary places.

IAN MORTON

Bombardier, Royal Artillery (Field)

BOHEMOND'S TOMB

I

FROM the east I came, from a far country:
not one of three, but alone—
not as one having wisdom
but a simple man seeking:
not bringing the rare gifts
but empty-handed:
not voyaging after a strange star
but to a known sea:
not looking for a birth nor for a death
yet finding a tomb.

Flying westwards along the salt edges of deserts,
over Oman with its burnt red mountainous waste-
lands,
seeing like Tennyson's eagle the wrinkled tropical
sea
evil and polished like the blue morocco binding
of the French engravings on the aesthete's scented
bookshelf;
across the black desert barred with fulvous stripes
like a tiger
to the first limestone steeps, the hill towns and the
terraced fields,
and beyond them the shores of the Mediterranean,
the ancient sea of the lands of the corn and wine
and the olive

and of my ultimate ancestry, my spirit's allegiance.
I had come home to the shores of the Midland Sea,
to the little fields with the silver-white stone walls,
olives grey-leaved with the thin pale dust of crum-
bled years,
vines rooting joyously in the richness of red-brown
soil,
the harvest-heavy plain with the creaking carts
piled and festooned and hung with bales of straw
or filled with black-frocked giggling unhandsome
girls
dustily bumping homeward down the sunset.
I had found again the little ancient towns
with their ageing stone and faded salmon-pink
plaster
provincial baroque with a rustic market-day
swagger
and a narrow street ending in the dazzling sheer
cliff
of the great arcaded Romanesque west front,
and then at last the tomb I had not sought to find
where Bohemond, first Prince of Antioch, lay.

II

Two narrow doors of age-green bronze,
green as the leaves on the trees after winter
(life after death, Thammuz arising)
narrow as the rock-cleft, the difficult doorway
leading to the ghostland and the wavering waters
mors ianua vitae.

The equivocal entry, the dubious departure—
what should I find beyond this portal,
death in its terror, life in its majesty,
the uncommunicable wonders of apocalypse
or the leering skull with the mocking whisper
et in Arcadia ego?

Pause at these doors made by Roger of Melfi,
see the stiffly chased hieratic figures
posed in the gestures of the Comnenine court
between the mysterious misunderstood Cufic
patterning the edges of the saracenic roundels
and now enter.

III

So still within the door,
lucent the dome
unencumbered the floor—
the wild bee's home.

Shrill the winged atomy
flies to the sun:
now is cramped life set free,
ended, begun.

Here is the empty tomb,
risen the lord:
vacant this small strange room
save for one word—

lone on the grey paving
Bohemond's name:
no memory craving,
exactng no claim.

IV

Here then I thought was life and here was death,
being so much for being so very little,
so empty and yet so large in nothingness
and all in a secret elusive loneliness
escaping edgeways from the intolerable crowd
where were no comrades either in death or life.

For are you then my comrades, fellow soldiers,
familiar yet strangers, known but not beloved,
strangers in a land where I had found a home-
coming

though never here before?

You, the young major with the corpse-white face
and cold blue eyes of implacable northern seas
met by Virgilian oaks at Trasimene
where hung the nets hieroglyphed green and brown
in caricature of the Cufic on the doors
(Death's signature on all!)

are you my comrade?

Or you, the slouching Americans in overalls,
drab young mechanics of the times to come
happy in hopes of a prefabricated future
(God's at his soda-fountain, all's right with the world)
what do we share?

and all of you for whom the war is life

and not the nightmare where in sleep the soul
paces the unending unlit corridor, opening a door
each morning on another empty room—
how can I turn to you?

My comrades are all dead, and I with them;
lead-lapped like old King Pandion we lie:
we found a death in these last murdering years.
I cannot hold for comrades
those who have not been stricken with the frost
whose souls have not been laid within the grave
waiting a sign.

There are those who are dead, being alive
and the dead are sometimes the only living.

v

And so I turn again to Bohemond's tomb,
there where the little city crowns the hill
beyond the Roman arch in the wide cornfield,
sturdy and russet, like the Apulian farmer
watching his ripening crop—
the crop that must die and be gathered before the
spring
brings a fresh sowing and a green resurrection.

We whom the war has brought to a time of death,
a parching of the spirit and a shrivelling up of the soul,
so that we stand like sere unharvested straw
stirred by the wind at dusk to a withered whispering,
hoping some grains of seed-corn may survive
for a new spring-time:

we are of the tombs and the ancient desert places
where many have hoped for life and some perhaps
found it
and a skull grins companionably among the stones.

VI

So dwells my spirit in its lonely cave
an anchorite
dead to the dark fear-shrouded world without,
aching for the immense and tremulous coming
of dawn's light.

war's poor thin harvest, spent and chill
yet knowing
that after winter comes again the sun
and out of hopeful earth the new crops rise
from sowing.

One of the shadowy living dead
but sharing
the secret knowledge with my fellow-ghosts
that nothing now can be too great a load
for bearing.

We who have died will have the surer strength
when we arise:
the tomb behind us, through the opening doors
we shall see clearly as the long night fades
before our eyes.

STUART PIGGOTT
Lieutenant Colonel, Intelligence Corps

PART IV

TROOPS

DISEMBARKATION

STOOPING, stumbling, swearing, dull-eyed men
Slouch in long lines across the slippery deck
Emerging slowly from their smelly pen—
Look out there or you'll break your blasted neck!—
And shamble to a blocked companion-way
Where drovers wait to urge them up and on,
While others, from the top, hold them at bay
Until a thousand more have safely gone.
Herded from the ship, they fill the quay
And shuffle into patient, waiting rows,
Helmeted, equipped and blanched, three by three,
A phalanx dark in which each white face shows:
Then turn and march away who flayed the Hun
To seek the butchers of the Rising Sun.

H. H. TILLEY

Major, Army Educational Corps

WONDERFUL INDIA

REMEMBER that the sun is hot
For months and months, and life is not
All seeing things, and you have got
A nose as well:

Child, that smell
Is something they can never tell.

REG. LEVY
Sergeant, Royal Army Pay Corps

PIN-UP

ON the walls
Above our beds
Are spreads
Of photogenic
Movie stars
In female
Attitudes.

Their heads
Are mostly
Teeth and smile
But they
Display
(Perhaps
Unwittingly)
That
Which spreads
Most fittingly
At heads
Of beds.

REG. LEVY
Sergeant, Royal Army Pay Corps

EFFORT

HERE I sit and sweat all day;
Here I sweat to earn my pay;
Four rupees a day I get
To sit and sit, and sweat and sweat.

REG. LEVY

Sergeant, Royal Army Pay Corps

JASPER, MARBLE AND KHAKI DRILL

INCONGRUOUS fate for us here to dwell
In khaki commonplace. Silver, exotic
Magenta and gold, disturbing the spell
Of our barrack life: entranced, erotic-

Seeming. Thin, strange music, jackals screaming,
Sudden, gaudy sundown; turbans, white, and red,
And green; saris, dimness and dreaming;
Suburban emotion, rising in bed,

Fearfully painting the innocent drum
Of a village wedding feast. Mile End Road
And Norwich, Camberwell, Glasgow and Brum
Rubbernecking the Taj Mahal (bestowed

By a prince on an unwilling people)
Wishing it were our own church steeple.

REG. LEVY
Sergeant, Royal Army Pay Corps

SHIPS

BUT still I have one ship to travel by.
It sails no seas yet brings an exile home;
It goes no place, yet needs a pilot. I
Would steer my people free.

Free from the chains that weigh the bows down,
Loose from the refuse that drags a blunted keel.
Clear decks for action! With steam and sail
Escape the dockside grasp.

Then we shall climb among the cliffs and breathe
Fresh winds fanned by the passing stars
And chart new courses for the ships we've dreamed
To ride the sky-deep seas.

CLIVE BRANSON
Sergeant, Royal Armoured Corps

From CITIZEN B.O.R. SPEAKING

DEMOCRACY, my grannie's foot!
I'm just another smell;
A lump o' dirt that's kicked around
This stinking, fly-blown hell.

I'm good enough to sweat an' stew,
And guard 'em from Japan;
I'm good enough, oh yes, to rot
In murderous Arakan.

I'm good enough to save the world
While they go out to play;
But if I ask 'em for a dance
They turn the other way.

Democracy! Don't make me laugh!
Don't trot out all that bunk!
I never even have the chance
To go an' get blind drunk.

The brightest jewel in the crown!
My God, it makes you weep!
Just listen here . . . but what's the use?
Let me get back to sleep.

H. H. TILLEY
Major, Army Educational Corps

TROOPS' CINEMA

CATCALLS communicate
Unsatisfied desire,
But the hot cutie
Eludes the grasp;

Only those youths
Who feed on shadows
Shall hold her beauty
In their arms;

I feel frustrated—
And bored almost to tears—
Returning to duty
Beneath familiar stars.

R. N. CURREY
Major, Army Educational Corps

THE WANDERER

'WILL you come back?' the Bride,
With a wordless intuition,
Whispered to her man
Shouldering his commission,
'You will come back?' she sighed.

She did not think of guns
Or gangrenes there might be.
But in her husband's eye,
Distracted she could see
Reflections of old suns.

Old seas' fanfaronade
Behind his eyeballs beat
She feared the outlandish
Hoot of parakeet
More than the singing lead,

Knowing that through his blood,
An antidote to the green
Peace of present farm,
The witch doctor's vaccine,
The roving virus, flowed.

He smiled with a blind heart;
Only she saw plain
The hawser holding him
Fret at the long tide's strain,
Fall strand by strand apart.

GORDON SYMES
Lieutenant, Intelligence Corps

FORGOTTEN ARMY

AFTER the heavy heat, the wind came
Fast and hard out of the South,
Destroying sun-drugged moods like flame
Scalding a lotus-oozing mouth.

Wind's lust is strong and male, not hooded
Like the evil of the calm—
A satyr leaping down the wooded slopes,
Raping the naked palm.

Tired bodies stirred then, sensing life,
And raised up languid heads to hear
The long whine like a flying knife
That hits with power, that calls for fear.

Raw violence swept, a cosmic purge
Scouring through decay and rust,
Made blood-mad by deadly surging,
Followed by its jackal—dust.

Hot in the valley curled red smoke,
Choking, blinding, toothed with grit,
While shapeless, mindless sand awoke
And, rabid, tore and clawed and bit.

After the brassy heat, the wind came,
But in the wind the unclean dust,
Until the dust was beaten tame
By rain that swamped the months-old crust.

Beyond the rain, the mud, a vile
Slow worm that fouled the earth
And crushed with hungry, sightless guile
The life that wind had ripped to birth.

The heat—the wind—the dust—the mud
Each grasps its hour, is cut away,
Savaged and slashed within its bud.
But we—we still await our day.

JAMES K. CASSELS
Corporal, West African Signals

THE SWORD

I AM the song of circumstance,
The lyric of all fact,
The silver freak of frozen spume
Struck from the cataract
Of war: the rod whose random glance
Steels impulse into act:
The bowstring on the arc of doom
Exuberant, exact.

I am the swift alarm of steel
That terrifies the air;
The prim paralysis of power,
The crystal of despair;
The single melody of the real
And murmur of the rare:
The dire enchantment of that hour
When large the furies flare.

I am the sublimate of clay,
The allotropy of lust—
Rigid, unswervable, inert
Climacteric of dust.
The accent of all tragedy
Trembles upon my thrust—
I am erect to reassert
The rigour of the trust.

The imperturbable countenance,
The sacrificial wine,
And the whisper in the sacred thirst
Of martyrs, are mine:
Mine the unearthly nonchalance
Of symbol, of design,
And fearing me, you fear the first
Significance of line;

For in my parallels the song
Of purpose vowed
Declares the enormous argument
To me alone allowed:
To me all privileges belong;
All beauty has bowed
In the severe accomplishment
Of the naked sword and proud!

GRAHAM CHERRY
Lieutenant Colonel, 60th Rifles

EXPERIMENT IN ANY CITY

WHAT is the shape of darkness, the lineament of death?

Come out into the crumbled street and I will show you—

Come swiftly before the foul birds swoop again.

Examine this child's body cradled in fallen masonry,
Splayed, now, like a straw doll slit and spilling its
sawdust,

A stranger to pity and love and wonder. Consider:
Move gently the torn arm and the stump that was a
hand once,

Flung finally over her face that must have seen the
horror.

They say that the ultimate vision of all is mirrored
On the surface of the glazed eyes recently dead.

Prepare, then,
To see the shape of darkness, the lineament of death.
Ah, but this face, now, has no eyes even.

NOEL FRANCIS TOWNLEY
Company Sergeant, Rhodesian African Rifles

BOMBAY DISASTER

IMMENSELY flowering in the blue sky,
upward in a slow unfolding surge
the white clouds rise, beautifully
shot with parabolas of hot steel.
Later I stand among embers, watching
the scarlet flowering of the night.
High-hearted beauty frames our work—
the silver lances from the hose,
soon shivered by the flame,
dissolve in rosy-tinted mist.

We move, heavily booted, grimed,
a little exultant in activity,
keyed to unwonted bonhomie—
we, small actors in the drama,
gather elation from the play.

Then in the dusky ruined street
we find her: one whose scene
had ended when the play began—
now she is curtained with a thrown sack;
the sari's careful folds unveil smooth limbs,
graceful and silver-bound,
and crossed in final courtesy. . . .
Now, as I leave her, beauty fades from sight,
and my elation dies.

W. A. HEBDITCH
Squadron Leader, Royal Air Force

AIR RAID

OUT of your soul has blistered night
toiled in the streets, licked the gutter-rot
and gutted the new-born, out of it dwindles
bones and the void of flesh and mind—
your flesh and mine for soon in my body
the moon finds dirt and smoke betrays air.

We were alive and taken as such,
blood was our hope and fire our past,
seasons were the corn and fruit of our will
and my love and yours the naked life
of the spirit. We were manifold
and the world a labyrinth for our discovery.

Came eternity and we felt it not,
nor system of government ruling on power,
came wage and profit and the order to live
in our streets of necessity,
but you were the word and I the telling of it
and opposite to that fled cities of a time.

Life was foretold and the mock of death
unknown. No light for crucifixion
humbled the dawn nor weeping at night
to vomit the sickness of the earth.
Tomorrow as before was the throat of the cock
and slate was the roof and brick the hearth.

LESLIE SOUTHGATE
Leading Aircraftman, Royal Air Force

NECROSIS

PALE and paler has the dull flesh shone
eyes dilated, shot with blood and pain,
as the feet, the tired, blistered feet traversed
the death-roads of the macerous earth.
they were stoned but not to death; half-martyred
and flung aside forgotten in the ditches;
raddled with the sense of the unborn, unconsum-
mated,
pattered the feet of the forgotten on the hills,
stumbled to frontiers; died even without regret
at these arbitrary barriers, in ships bound
for a promised land; hope bartered in salerooms,
secret places, bankers' luxurious corridors.
Sold, the curve of body's youth for scraps of paper
hope
and died and died again as the pestle clanged
in the mortar of humanity.

MICHAEL EDWARDES
Signalman, Royal Signals

BEFORE THE BOMBARDMENT

ALONG the road towards the Imphal Plain
Steel-blue wistaria anticipated bayonets,
and the lovely cargo of the tree of heaven
exploded in a thousand red grenades;
in the river bottoms all the flowers
had the statue touch of dead men's hands.

All these men now strongly islanded in hope,
Once watched the wreckage of their golden youth
go by, in the hours that funnelled out futility
lived as monks counting the white nights;
With fever's ghosts still shouting in their eyes,
They wait for steel and powder to unlock the mind.

In these hills that cage the silence,
Putting down gigantic lids on joy,
That hold the spring in their stony hands
as a trapped bird struggling,
saw men standing on the edge of the world,
Each from his separate cell look up at the sun.

FRANCIS CARNELL
Lieutenant Colonel, Army Educational Corps

THESE HANDS

BESIDE the burnt-out remnants of this place,
I saw the lifeless hands above the earth.
Here then was war; enfolded in this space;
For this—for this, a man was given birth.

The shallow grave would scarce the body hide.
Akimbo sprawled, the hands were still and grey.
I could not pass, but knelt down by his side,
To scrape the soil, and cover from the day.

These hands, I said, once moved, and felt, and
knew
The warmth of other hands, and touched things
dear;
Perhaps had picked firm fruit, or flowers grew,
Or turned bright wheels, or trailed through water
clear.

But now no life beneath my burning touch;
I tried to hide, which may have been my own,
Dead fingers here, which once at life did clutch.
But now I press them down, alone—alone.

It seems so strange, the unexpected things,
That one is called to do, in times like these.
My mind revolves, and childhood memory brings
The tears I shed, and now I *cannot* grieve.

Only some deep-down pain I cannot show,
Wells in my heart, and floods without a sound,
For this quiet heap, where grasses soon will blow,
For him who knows me not, beneath this mound.

R. A. GEORGE
Gunner, Royal Artillery (Field)

OUTLOOK

THEY'LL halt their armoured echelons in the
forests,
The cactus forests in the stony valleys;
Looking for shade and finding only shadow;
Looking for fruit upon the crippled branches;
Looking for water in the water courses;
Listening for songs to drown the crickets' singing.

They'll halt and laager down among the mountains;
Chewing the bitter leaves; cursing the sun;
Watching the lizards on the brick-hot boulders;
Waiting for word along the l. of c.

The shapes of their machines will be meaningless.
The motions of their hands will be meaningless.
Only the sky, sweeping down like a woman's hair
Over distant, broken roofs
May indicate a direction, half forgotten.

N. H. C. SMITH

Lieutenant, Royal Indian Army Service Corps

FROM AN AIRCRAFT

HERE at ten thousand feet the neutral eye,
Not knowing where to look for frontiers,
Believes the welcome and attractive lie
That the green globe is indivisible;

Sees the haphazard rivers that do not care
What beasts or people wander to their banks
And vultures waiting in the unmapped air
Content to swoop wherever dead flesh lies.

But hidden in the smothering undergrowth
Are the compelled and patient witnesses
Who swear division is the only truth.
Oh luckless boys who inherit a broken earth.

GEORGE TAYLOR
Sergeant, Royal Air Force

From: THE ARAKAN

III

I HAVE no love for Letwedet,
Nor for Sinzweya scorn;
These clustered huts and herds
Of a pathetic peasantry, these crops,
These trees, flowers, birds,
Now move me only as the dim-lit props
And scenery of an empty stage;
More rightly might some Prester John
Or Marco Polo scan these outlandish hills—
We do not seem to belong.

Yet the rose is not all thorns, nor the fire ashes;
All these, my comrades, in the Arakan,
All have their Oxford Street, their silver wheat,
Their bone, their bane;
Therefore they do right to overlay
On a landscape bitter-sweet
The charm of dream,
And to see the gleam
Of half-forgotten Heaven in the sunrise
Fringing the Mayu Range with temporary glory,
In the Arakan, in the Arakan,
Where loneliness betimes begets a man
From the severe skull, the bitter bone;

—And always to the East, sun-glancing,
The Kalapanzin, the Kalapanzin
Goes gleaming; flows dreaming
The Kalapanzin, the Kalapanzin.

IV

This, they told me, was war;
This waiting, crouching, silent fumbling on
Through crazy undergrowth;
These dead and wounded men and mules;
This melody of the mysterious bullet
Sung straight through the discord of green;
This sepoy crying for loss of limb and sight;
This wounded Jap prisoner, gabbling fanatic;
This long, long darkness, smoking not allowed;

—And always to the East, sun-glancing,
The Kalapanzin, the Kalapanzin
Goes gleaming; flows dreaming
The Kalapanzin, the Kalapanzin.

GRAHAM CHERRY
Lieutenant Colonel, 60th Rifles

THE FORTY DAYS

FULL forty days this legion forced the ruined town
Flanked as it was by Hell's green growth
And knife-edged mountains west and south.

Forty days men marched, fell and died
While finger-nails of steel tore traces on those souls
Approaching bunkers on the neutral hills.

Hard harsh jerk of Japanese five-round fire across
Obtruding bones of blasted trees
Marked mass graves in target rows.

And forty days these bunkers bore the brunt
Of British guns but in the end
Were forced commit death's secrets to the land.

Bungalowed in earth, a thousand fighting Japs
Haunt the concrete courts and wait
With British bones the order to retreat.

R. B. WILCOCK
Corporal, Royal Army Service Corps

BATTALION H.Q. BURMA

DANTE imagined it thus, and Doré reading
Saw eye to eye with him. The signallers crouch
In their dark holes tense as the wires that reach
For the tilted pole. Watch the torsos swing
In the hot pit as the dust peels like petals
Of thin ruin from the cliff face, and when
The guns shout in the narrow valleys, a little
More shifts, like a girl arranging her dress,
At the start of the party waiting for the young men.

There in the black tunnels, like red blood
The lines hang from the telephones, and the heat
Grins, palpable, commanding, like a foreman stood
Astride his ditches. See where the colonel sits
In his Dante-cum-Doré inferno, apart,
Gesturing like a fastidious actor, correct
And cool with his veined hands.

A small part,
No lifting of heavy words to the gilded darkness,
But charming, and in a quiet way, almost perfect.

IVOR ROBERTS-JONES
Lieutenant, Royal Artillery

LISTENING POST

BARBED wire spun by the brutal
Spider of our thoughts across
The flooding moon is our hate's
Symbol uncertain twisted
Threading its menace through the
Silver veils of unwed clouds
Woven stretching around the
Bleak spines of bayonets pushed
Up in silhouetted ranks
Like church spires of a far town's
Star-sky relieved horizon.
Trees, bushes camouflage the
Metal light in etched patterns
Like mail hammered out of night
In magic of a cold forge,
Fired by the anger of men's hearts.
Anger for whom? Hating whom?
A crawling silence answers
Creeping into strained ears with
The slow methodical telling
Of a sluggish quiet river which
Whispers and nudges its bed-stones
Into a realization
Of tides—and rustle of the
Individual leaf, each tremor

Of grass blades stealthily echoes
A story of the sudden
Sharp, expected blade of death.

PATRICK TUDOR-OWEN
Leading Aircraftman, Royal Air Force

DEFEAT

O THE flower, the flower
Of the land is dust

In a bankrupt hour
Of a spendthrift season
Purpose, dying, cries:
I am a broken thing
If this was privilege
If this was power
I have done with both

Call off the battle
Haul down the banners

Music is fallen
The skies run blood
Exploit crumbles
Honour's a mock
Silence the drummers
Silence the trumpeters
Send them away away

I pine no more
For Despair's embraces
She's turned a whore
Bring up the poisons
Lay out the graveclothes
Whistle for the worms

—O the flower, the flower
Of the land is dust

The laurels are burning
Round the sepulchres
The birds cannot fly

Where are the heralds
Where are the champions
—Gone with the goblins
Drunk in the temples

Call up the torturers
O strip Beauty bare
Tear the flesh from Truth

. . . Leave me alone, alone
I am a broken thing
I'll drink up eisel
Cosset the grave
Roll with the maggot
Get the worm with child

For the flower, the flower
Of the land is dust.

GRAHAM CHERRY
Lieutenant Colonel, 60th Rifles

BURMA: DEFEAT AND VICTORY

WAITING, waiting now, the battle done,
The little wind of God blows through the mind
And turns the brittle leaves of memory;
The newest memory of our thoughtless kind.
The branches stir, of lately sleeping thought,
And, sluggishly at first, the whole tree wakes
After the hail that lulled it into sleep.
We are the tree. The grasp of winter breaks;
Yet still the voices of the spring are hushed.
We have but memory of the winter passed
And Hope, born with the dawn (so late the dawn),
That strength may be restored to us at last.

We stood upon the drear and misty hill
And turned and gazed whence we had come, and
saw
The hungry vapours writhing in the vale;
The ghosts who fought with us but fight no more, no
more.
Above the burning world we made our fires
And cooked our rice, and shivered in the rain,
And slept, and rose, and turned and marched away:
And who knows if we shall come back again?
We were the fighting men; we bore our arms
To battle, fought, and left our dead behind;
Sorrowfully marched toward the setting sun.

Cold on the mountain wails the little wind.

High on the hills the paeon throbs and rings,
Over the clouded peaks. Among the trees,
Through the deep valleys, down the forest trails,
Toward the sunrise with the morning breeze.
Splendid has come the dawn and bright the day;
The fallen die in victory at last:
The camp fires of the living glow more bright
For all the sorry darkness that is past.
This is the fight we dreamed of long ago
When all our fighting led but to defeat.
This is our battle and our hour, nor evermore
Shall we pass through the mountains in retreat.

Strong blows the wind towards the rising sun;
The winds of God, the tide of war, have turned.
Thanks be to Him, peace to the restless ghosts.
Strong in our arms and hearts, we have returned.

P. R. BOYLE
Major, The Cameronians

PART VI

DEATH AND MEMORIAL

REQUIEM FOR A BROTHER

How did he answer the irrevocable command
When infinity spoke with a soundless voice?
Did he dare to question Reality,
Did he dare to outstare Death?
Or did he turn his head away
To watch the sinews in his hand
Obey the last orders of his brain?
He was too young, too young to disagree,
Too old, too old to disobey
And so he died.

The long unlovely form
Recast by love in beauty's mould
Now rots, and rightly so;
Who cares for flesh when blood's run cold
And sinews creep no longer to the whispered word
Of nerve and brain? He's dead.

STEPHEN RICKARD

Captain, Royal Indian Army Service Corps

OBLATION

BODY sings to the soul, and the soul answers.

From the distant waterfall sounded
A thunder, as of men marching.
But the boy asleep smiled and turned
And was still again. His dark head
Stirred upon the dark and stirring earth.
Green leaves sailed upon the quiet pool.

Beyond time's barren grasp,
Beyond the shadow and the trumpet
And the sorrow, beyond the edge
Of all dreaming, out of night,
Out of sweetness and out of lust.
The touch is bodiless, the song unsung.

The soul, knowing no home, seeks
The long, ingathered going home.
The twilight is one brief travail
From the dawn. The sword,
Before it is forged, must break and rust,
The wine is spilled, and God is on a cross.
Soul sing and body break. The bread is broken.

JOHN CONNELL
Captain, Royal Artillery.

BESIDE THE POOL

BESIDE the pool are no more the familiar faces,
The uniforms, the fair-headed boys are gone—
Deserted and hot the unfamiliar place is,
All glare where the radiance shone.

Ah the sudden rush of the showers in late December,
The moon that rocked above a pivoting star—
And there were parakeets crying, as I remember,
Where now no parakeets are.

The mile still stretches along the river, but not the
river
That was there when they were there—
The date palms droop as they drooped, and the
neems still quiver,
But the thick blank grass is bare.

There is silence and powdered salt on the fountain
basin
Beside whose rainbow his eyes were jewelled in lust—
But there is no longer any need to hasten,
For at the end there is nothing to lie with but dust.

F. M. SWEETING
Regimental Sergeant Major, Royal Engineers

DEATH is a matter of mathematics.

It screeches down at you from dirtywhite
nothingness

And your life is a question of velocity and altitude,
With allowances for wind and the quick, relentless pull
Of gravity.

Or else it lies concealed
In that fleecy, peaceful puff of cloud ahead.
A streamlined, muttering vulture, waiting
To swoop upon you with a rush of steel.
And then your chances vary as the curves
Of your parabolas, your banks, your dives,
The scientific soundness of your choice
Of what to push or pull, and how, and when.

Or perhaps you walk oblivious in a wood,
Or crawl flat-bellied over pockmarked earth,
And Death awaits you in a field-gray tunic.
Sights upright and aligned. Range estimated
And set in. A lightning, subconscious calculation
Of trajectory and deflection. With you the focal
point,

The centre of the problem. The A and B
Or Smith and Jones of schoolboy textbooks.

Ten out of ten means you are dead.

BARRY CONRAD AMIEL
Lieutenant, Royal Artillery (Heavy Anti-Aircraft)

THOUGHT FROM PLATO

IF I should sport with Death and render him
his dues of flesh and bone opaque and still,
then do not pray to find me in the dim
hours of your sleep come wandering back to fill
your minds with long regret. I shall be free
from every boundary of space and time,
and in my phantom you could only see
impurities which were too gross to climb
out of the world. Leave them if such there be,
to join my dust and find oblivion,
keeping yourselves a timeless memory
of any virtue that has travelled on.

HAIGHTON LARR
Lieutenant, Royal Artillery (Field)

TRUTH

WHY do you look for truth, my love?
It isn't below nor up above.
That hill that curves against the sky
Knows no more than you and I.
Trace the stream back to its source,
Analyse its stumbling course;
Prise the stars from their velvet setting,
Look behind the wire netting;
Search the cellar, check the mail,
Empty out the cowman's pail;
Borrow books from the biblical section;
Study the causes of insurrection;
Try to find the poet's feeling;
Wreck the walls and strip the ceiling,
Interrogate the anxious men,
Third-degree them once again;
Still these hills repel your stare,
You won't find any secrets there,
Passion's truth 's a still-born lie,
Killed by love's exultant cry;
There are no truths in fancy's cloud,
The only truth is in the shroud.

MICHAEL GREENING
Corporal, Royal Engineers

MORTUIS

I

WE died. Our bones are whitening on the sand,
The velvet skies of night our star-jewelled pall.
We rot on fever-haunted jungle trails,
Our only requiem the bull-frog's call.
We lie amid the silence of the snows
(What whiter shroud?). Or in the endless night
Of the deep seas, where all the eyeless hosts
Candle our biers with phosphorescent light.
Far from the lands we loved, that gave us birth,
Our sepulchre this whole tormented earth.

2

We died. The strings have prematurely snapped
That moved us in this sorry puppet-show.
These clay-cold fingers cannot now create
The beauty that the world will never know.
Has typhus killed a second Phideas,
And dysentery a new Beethoven slain?
Did some young Raphael fall at Stalingrad?
Lies a Keats buried at El Alamein?
What you have paid is but a dim surmise.
Do you buy dear? With you the answer lies.

3

We died. We were the ashes from a flame.
 The dust blown high and lost upon the breeze,
 The flag-draped box beside an open grave,
 A little swirl upon the angry seas.
 The fear and hate that steeled us for the fight
 Sloughed from our spirits with our splendid youth.
 In you these subtle poisons fester still,
 Fed by the likely lie, the biased truth.
 While men of every skin and tongue and faith,
 Lie marshalled in one fellowship of death.

4

We died, nor seek some trite memorial—
 The sword-decked cross, the hollow cenotaph,
 Built for our sons to gaze on, as they march
 To other wars. Let our sole epitaph
 Be read, like Wren's, by looking round about
 On laughing eyes, that hold no lurking dread,
 On singing lips, that do not need to tell.
 'Our hate we buried deep, beneath our dead'.
 If men are brothers, in a world made sane,
 We shall sleep well, not having died in vain!

J. W. L. FORGE
Lance Corporal, Royal Signals

MISSING—BELIEVED DROWNED

ALONE, quite alone now;
Only the slap of the hump-backed wave
Can reach him here,
Washing away his manhood, far away.

Awake, all agape his face,
Stabbing surprise at the sea-stretched sky
That saw him fall.
And O his mouth but a cut for the tide.

His was no newspaper death.
No high-explosive slogan-burst
Heightened his heart, nor did the singing lead
Write headlines in the prophet-sky for him.

Merely the heart of the world
Turned cold; and he was erased; his head
Is a seed that never took root,
A stub that is crushed before it's alight.

Do not watch, do not watch;
This is the issue, the pay-book, the number,
This is not him;
Too casually he slips and ebbs with the running
tide.

O, do not look for an answer.
The birds of the drowned as they mew,
Do not know, do not know.
And under all the sea lies, vast and menacing.

MICHAEL GREENING
Corporal, Royal Engineers

ECHO

FORGET us not: but do not remember
By pageantry; a specified moment
In time, harnessing the reminiscing mind;
Monoliths in stone; or the hollow,
Reflective, mockery of church bells:
Rather when the winter sun, red at midday
Filters thinly through gaunt trees, glistens
On frosted pools; remember our coldness.
Or remember when dappled autumn leaves,
Russet and red, thick under-foot,
Carpet the lanes, crisply soft; when scented
Hay, sweet after rain, arrests your straying
Consciousness; and swifts, ending their long summer
Flight, at last turn southwards. In firelight
And introspective mood; in waking moments
When vague unmarshalled thoughts retrace former
scenes:
Remember us.

T. B. P. OWEN

Sergeant, Royal Army Service Corps

BRAVELY cast the photograph away, the stained
celluloid,
Disclaim the monuments, the cubes of weathered
stone,
Hide not the treasured name, the sacred memory,
Beneath a faded wreath of ravaged flowers.
His lively face will greet you in the widened streets
Amidst the happy throngs, the crowds of whistling
boys
Or in demurralled parks, where children nimbly
play
Unshadowed by the circled threat, unquestioned
in their joy,
Between the sunlit schools and peopled squares.
In every group, where free debate instructs and
satisfies,
His voice will sound, will shout exultant hymns
Of great hopes realized, and open wide
Will gape the shallow futile grave.

J. B. HAWKINS
Corporal, Royal Army Medical Corps

‘ON THESE ONE MIGHT RAISE
BANNERS’

(For the dead of Kohima)

ON these one might raise banners,
Coloured garish tributes, or
Hang on them the laurels of
Unforgotten faiths, mottoes
For courage. But no flag poles
These white skewers torn from trees,
Trunks pitted with steel, whipped by
The bright hail and here and there
Charred weals tell where flame has lashed
Through smoke, yellow banded black
Suffused by scent of cordite
And rolling harshly round in
Echoes of the mortar’s cough,
The sudden expletive of
Grenade and sniping bullet;
Disease has gripped the green earth,
Fruitful skin pocked with shell-hole;
Fox-hole, trench, bunkers erupt,
Fester of bodies in hot suns.
Still silent wooden spearshafts
Sentinel above unsleeping
Earth, the trees alone may raise
Their splintered trunks and caught upon
This pointed agony, shell-blown

And torn by hate, unequal
Khaki fragments drape their threads
To tell how man has gone into the dust.
These are the ragged standards of the dead.

PATRICK TUDOR-OWEN
Leading Aircraftman, Royal Air Force

From: SUITE, 1944

(i) *Lament after Kohima*

SILENT the wings in the red tent of sky,
silent the sharp wound and the ancient malady,
lamps, fountains, loving and hating;
silent all images of sight and custom.

Now the weary fall and slow death of day,
Vocal silence, cessation of melody
Grown as a wood over old friendliness of greeting
Sinks with the end of memory to efface them.

And then O when the pain we pay our dead is
spent, and the frozen fiery tongues that grieve,
what rests that is at all restorative
wrapped in the earth grown cold as now their
blood is?

And O the intolerable ache of love
Stilled and silent now in all their bodies.

(ii) *Meditation—Palel*

The morning air was as sleek
as a silk robe. At noon
sweat rode each man's back
under the coltish sun.
At evening we may turn
to reckon up our luck.

Who marks the hours that run
convergent through the day's
long cycle to decline,
or does not find excuse
for letting time slip on
to mask his maladies,

make circumstances human
and forget the common mud
in a personal solitude
of domestic tasks, that sharpen
his own delight or daemon
by the general expense of blood?

So heaven swung roaring by
like a paddle-wheel, the stream
as clear as morning lay,
leapt rearward to resume
in mingled dwindling foam
its strength of the noonday.

Who takes care for the morrow
is fool to his own illusion;
life or the downtop barrow,
divinity or negation,
another bears its harrow;
now is the one true vision.

Throughout the long close season
curtained by rain, still we
maintained our destiny.
The mist's white misprision
heavy upon the scree
deadened our perception
of its working, of the face
of death himself that crept
stealthy to muffle us.
Close the blanket kept
from which the sun bounds loose,
its absolute lumen clipped;

whose pity's ultimate scope
still sees men as mute
as ciphers on a map
yet shares the hemlock cup
of each immediate
and desolate defeat.

For those of us whose hearts
held no acquaintance with the fact of death
pray for us now, in the hour of our death.

For those of us who let their thoughts ride out
to travel in geography or time
pray for us, now in the hour of our death.

For those who were content,
who were neither happy nor unhappy, to whom
one day's burden was another's burden,
pray for us.

(iv) *Serenade to a Slit Trench*

Darkness climbs to dew that chills;
chaste am I in the cold moon
while the lonely starlight spills
round the sandbag walls like rain.

Petals fell from a tall tree
silently and sicklily
petals black with the dark blood's stain;
timor mortis conturbat me.

Water chokes in fouled wells,
the rank grass whimpers and the green
silence muffles the mouthless slain
round the hundred sandbag walls.

H. L. SHORTO
Captain, Intelligence Corps

WHAT world is this,
Where turnings meet the wall?
Where hunger-haunted haloes kiss
The sleeping youths who fall
Defiling distant fields?
Where glory smears its false
Medallions on frustrated breasts?
The broken crests
Of servitude's fulfilment.

Diplomats recline
On soft intrigue,
The trumpet politic
Shrills the fool to arms,
Bright legions spank
The bovine masses,
With a loud, victorious flag
And brag
Their clean, mechanic lines.

What world is this,
Where art's shy brows are creased,
Literature's true face concealed
In hateful mud,
Where music's lost philosophy
Reeks of cordite chords?

Rhythmically the new tune pounds
Its endless rounds—
'The young, brass sun shines blindly
In a sky of faded grey,
The blood of grinding battle
Flowing brilliantly away,
With the slaughter and the pain
Of the choking, shattered men,
The laughter of the idiots
And the weeping of the sane. . . .'
What world, what world is this?

JAMES RIDLER
Flying Officer, Royal Air Force

TO A YOUNG WRITER, 1945

BEFORE men wrote, they needed death
To shape the page, and make the stain,
To steal away a calf's soft breath
And make white vellum through its pain;
To gather in a million lives
Lived in small shrubs, that there might be
Corpses enough for craftsmen's wives
To pound to ink with industry.

Before men write, they need sharp death
To make papyrus sigh, and fall,
A pad for scribing Yodh and Teth;
Or to uncurl the bark from tall
Northern trunks, that patterned mud
Should have a base for crudely spelling
(In place of quickly-fading blood)
The truths the tribal gods were telling.

Later, men wrote, and called swift death
Along twin tracks to narrow seams
Where sweat could see no Nazareth,
Though nail-prints scarred the propping beams;
For men had found that manuscript
Could multiply through blended steels—
And, in the presses, warm blood dripped
Along the levers, through the wheels.

Before men wrote, they needed death
Of love or joy, to gain a pen
Like his who knew Elizabeth,
For—‘You must suffer first, and then. . . .
Now, have not all men suffered when
They made them something that has life?
Don’t women do it, *making* men?
Don’t surgeons do it with the knife?’

Oh, if death underlies the print,
And gives to art its depth and height,
What gold is flowing to the mint!
Dear God, the books you’re going to write!

JAMES K. CASSELS
Corporal, West African Signals

KOHIMA MEMORIAL

Copied from the memorial to the 2nd Division at Kohima. The words are a translation from the Greek.

W^{HEN} you go home
Tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow
We gave our today.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

BARRY CONRAD AMIEL, a Londoner, aged 23, says of himself that he 'entered the war as a refugee from Tacitus and de Musset'. He went overseas to the M.E. in 1942 and was commissioned there a year later. Served in India with Indian Heavy Anti-Aircraft. 'Present interests—Shakespeare (and) Karl Marx.'

TARA ALI BAIG was born in 1916, and has been educated in America, Switzerland, and the University of Dacca, Bengal. She publishes in various Indian journals and is especially interested in Indo-English verse.

J. O. BARTLEY, born and educated in Ireland, is a university professor by civilian profession. In this war he has served as a Staff Major, and as Deputy Chief Press Adviser to the Government of India. He has published books, articles, reviews, and poems in India, the U.K., and Eire.

EDWARD LORING BLACK was born in 1915 and educated at Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, Sutton Coldfield, and at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge. He was a schoolmaster before going into the R.A.F.

CLIVE BRANSON, writer, artist, and member of the British Battalion of the International Brigade in Spain, fought in this war as a Sergeant in the Royal Armoured Corps, and was killed in action in the Arakan in February 1944. He is best known through his letters, published soon after his death under the title of *British Soldier in India*.

RALPH BROOKE, born in 1918, read for an arts degree at Birmingham University, where he contributed verse to college magazines. He was called up in 1939 and has served in India, mostly in the Pay Corps, since March 1944.

FRANCIS GEORGE CARNELL, aged 33, has lived most of his life in the West Country. After taking his degree at Oxford he stayed on for three years to do tutoring and research. Joined the army in the ranks of the Royal Armoured Corps and has served for over three

years in West Africa, South East Asia, and India Commands. In the A.E.C. has written and edited Current Affairs Pamphlets.

JAMES KENNETH CASSELS was born in Scotland in 1909. He studied for ordination; at the outbreak of war joined the B.E.F., and was evacuated from Dunkirk. He possesses parachute 'wings' but 'no longer unfolds them'. Is serving in S.E.A.C. with West African troops. Has contributed stories and articles to various periodicals.

BRYAN WILLIAM CAVE-BROWNE-CAVE was born in 1915 and educated at Shrewsbury and St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. At Oxford he was Secretary of the O.U.D.S., after which he became Features and Drama Producer under Val Gielgud. He entered the army in 1939, and came to India in 1942, being posted to New Delhi to start broadcasting services for India and S.E.A. Commands in December 1943.

ARTHUR GRAHAM PAUL CHERRY, born in 1910, and educated at St. Alban's School and Oxford University, is a schoolmaster, lecturer, and writer. His publications include *The Sword and Other Poems*, and his ambitions centre in poetry and the improvement of education. He was a staff officer with the 7th Indian Division, 1942-4, and has served in Burma.

JOHN CONNELL (J. H. Robertson), 35 years old, educated at Loretto and Balliol, wrote leaders for the *Evening News* for eight years, and is the author of five novels including *Tomorrow We Shall Be Free*. He has served in the Middle East and in India for the last four years.

RALPH NIXON CURREY, born in South Africa in 1907, was educated at Kingswood School and Wadham College, Oxford. He has published poems and stories in periodicals in Britain and the United States; *Tiresias and Other Poems* (1940), *This Other Planet* (1945). Entered army 1941; passed most of his service as an artillery subaltern; India since 1943.

MICHAEL EDWARDES. 'Mainly interested in modern art and writing art-criticism, but uses poetry as a safety-valve for anger, cynicism, and other more disreputable emotions. Hopes to have a novel ready for rejection this year.'

STEPHEN FENLAUGH is a gunner officer with a cosmopolitan

background. Born 1924. 'Mother Polish, Father Free French, self English. Educated . . . in half a dozen countries, ending at Oxford. Past career day-dreaming, future career preferably ditto, but doubtful.'

JAMES WILLIAM LINDUS FORGE lives in Weybridge, Surrey and is an architect by civilian profession. He was born in 1911 and educated at the King's College School, Wimbledon. He entered the army in 1940 and since then has served in Egypt, India, and Burma.

JOHN GAWSWORTH (Terence Ian Fytton Armstrong), born 1912 and educated at Merchant Taylors' School, is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, was awarded the Benson Medal in 1939, and was founder editor of the *English Digest*. Since 1941 he has served with the R.A.F. in numerous theatres, including Italy and India. He has been author and editor of some sixty volumes, including *Legacy to Love*, his selected poems of 1931-41.

R. A. GEORGE was born in 1919, educated at Burnham C.E. School, studied for Customs and Excise; joined the T.A., Bucks Yeomanry; was called up in September 1939 and has served in France (Dunkirk), India, and Burma. His interests are literature and water-colours.

RONALD V. GIBSON is 36 years of age. He went, after an interval in business, to Caius College, Cambridge. Here he started a Liberal paper and became President of the Cambridge Union, subsequently touring America with a University debating team. He joined the *Times of India* in 1939 and was with them until he went into the army in 1941. He served with the R.I.A.S.C. until August 1944.

ALFRED JOSEPH GILLIVER was born in London in 1920, educated at St. Dunstan's College, Catford, and worked in the Civil Service until he entered the Royal Signals in 1940. He has served in the India Command between 1940 and 1945.

DOUGLAS GRAY was educated at Batley Grammar School and London University, where he took an Honours Degree in French, and at the Sorbonne where he achieved the L. ès L. In civil life he taught French; and has served in the army in the Pay Corps.

MICHAEL GILLINGHAM GREENING is 28 years old. He was

educated at St. Paul's School, London, and worked for six years in the Chief Accountant's Office of the G.W.R. His service, since 1940, includes the Norway episode and a year in India. An active member of the Trade Union movement.

WILFRED ARTHUR HEBDITCH was born in 1908, and educated at Selhurst Grammar School. A bank cashier in civil life, he was in the Auxiliary Fire Service at the beginning of the war, after which he served with the R.A.F. He helped to edit a unit paper and published several poems in it.

PAUL HULTON was born in 1918 and educated at Kingswood School and Worcester College, Oxford, where he ran for the University. Has served for four years in India and S.E.A. Commands, until recently as an artillery officer. Finds that 'travelling in new lands has not provided an immediate stimulus to writing poetry, rather a deterrent, but impressions have gone into storage'.

FREDERIC HAIGHTON LARR. 'After a struggle with the Classics I left Marlborough and volunteered for the gunners. My chief interests, even in India, are music, marionettes, and literature. I was born in 1924.'

REGINALD LEVY, born in 1914 in Spitalfields, had an East End elementary education, and worked in various offices until he entered the army in 1940. Most of his army service has been as a private in the Pay Corps, but he has recently—he says 'entirely fortuitously'—been promoted to sergeant. 'Enthusiasms: mountains, poetry, fencing, and education (other people's).'

ALUN LEWIS died, by accident, on the Arakan front at the age of 28. He was born at Aberdare, and educated at Cowbridge Grammar School and the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth; then he became a schoolmaster, entering the army in 1940. His poems *Raider's Dawn* (1941), *Ha! Ha! Among the Trumpets* (1945), and his stories *The Last Inspection* (1942) mark him out as perhaps the most severe loss to English writing of this war. He came to India in 1943, and in prose as well as poetry set a new standard in writing about this country.

R. V. LEYDEN is a naturalized Englishman who was born in Berlin in 1908, and left Germany in 1933 on political grounds. He studied geology at Goettingen, Heidelberg, and Berlin, as well as in Greece. He is the author of an *Oxford War Atlas* (Indian edition) and many

periodical contributions on art; he used to write poetry in German, and is now doing so in English.

J. C. H. MOLLISON was born in 1922 and lives in Sevenoaks, Kent. He joined the army in 1942, and has 'been writing on and off since the age of fourteen.'

IAN MORTON, born in 1917, was educated at Steyning Grammar School, and has published poetry in a number of civilian and army journals. He has served with the Royal Artillery in India, Ceylon, and Burma. Has been wounded.

MADAN LAL OBROI was born in 1913 and educated at the Punjab and Oxford Universities. Before entering the army he was a lecturer at Lahore.

THOMAS BADEN POWELL OWEN, who came to India in 1942, contributes to various left-wing weeklies, and hopes to publish his first book of poems this year. He is 26.

STUART PIGGOTT was born in 1910. He is an archaeologist who has specialized in Western European prehistory. Served in the ranks 1939-41 and as an Intelligence Officer 1941-5, the last three years in India. Author of *Some Ancient Cities of India* (1945).

STEPHEN RICKARD was born in Surrey in 1917. He left his public school for an art school at 16, where he won a scholarship to Royal Academy schools. Here he obtained further scholarships and medals for sculpture, but his course was interrupted by the war. He exhibited two works of sculpture in the Royal Academy in 1940. Entered the army in 1940 and came to India in 1942.

WALTER JAMES FISHER RIDLER was born in Shanghai in 1922 and lived in China until he was 11. He went to school at Canford in Dorset, and joined the R.A.F. as a pilot in 1942. His main interests are in writing and amateur theatricals: one of his plays was performed by his Wing.

IVOR ROBERTS-JONES. Born in 1914. Educated at Worksoy, and at the Goldsmith's School of Art and the Royal Academy School of Sculpture. Has served with the Royal Artillery since 1940, since 1943 in Burma.

RONALD FREDERICK BENJAMIN ROLING was born in

Gillingham in 1919, and his civilian employment was at the R.N. Armament Depot, Chatham. His hobbies are reading, cycling, and music. He has done his period of service in India and is due to return home.

HUGH BARTHOLOMEW SHELLEY. 'After an abortive University education (Paris 4 months, Oxford 9 months) joined army December 1940. January 1941 left for India and a year in 9th Jat Regiment, whence transferred to Intelligence. F.S., Staff, and Instructional jobs until September 1944 when joined 14th Army. Now with Field Security Section in Burma, age 25.'

HARRY LEONARD SHORTO was born in 1919, and educated at the Royal Masonic School and St. John's College, Cambridge. Went straight from the university into the army in 1939 and has served with the Royal Artillery in Ceylon, India, and Burma.

NORMAN HARRY CHARLES SMITH, born in London in 1919, 'has been in turn a metallurgical chemist, motor mechanic, textile buyer and student at Birmingham University'. He volunteered for service in India in 1941 and is a Station Transport Officer with the R.I.A.S.C. 'Reads avidly the *Autocar* and T. S. Eliot. Listens to nothing between swing music and Brahms. Avoids all sports.'

LESLIE CHARLES SOUTHGATE is 24. A local government clerk in civil life, he has spent the last three years serving east of the Brahmaputra with the R.A.F.

F. M. SWEETING, a Londoner, has published poems in magazines and anthologies. 'Writes short stories and has tried his hand at plays. Spent several years enjoying life before the war, and spent the war at G.H.Q., India.'

GORDON PEMBERTON SYMES was born in 1917 and educated at Oxford. Joined army in 1939 and went to France in 1940. India 1943-4. Now at Washington, U.S.A. Wrote for Oxford periodicals; has since contributed to *Penguin New Writing*, *First 18*, &c., and has had work published and broadcast in India and the U.S.A.

GEORGE ALBERT TAYLOR was born in St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex, and lived there till joining the R.A.F. in 1941; he worked in a Local Government office and took an active part in the Workers'

Educational Association. Has been east of the Brahmaputra since 1943. Is interested in oriental culture and has started writing verse since coming to India.

HAROLD HUGH TILLEY, teacher, lecturer, author, journalist, was born in 1910, and educated at Halesowen Grammar School, Worcester, Birmingham University, and Trinity College, London. He entered the Royal Signals in 1940, transferring to the A.E.C. in 1941; he has served in India since 1943.

NOEL FRANCIS TOWNLEY was born in the Transvaal in 1914, and educated at Potchefstroom. He worked in the Native Affairs Department in Southern Rhodesia from 1932 until enlistment in the South Rhodesian Signals Coy. He has served in the Arakan since December 1944.

PATRICK TUDOR-OWEN, who is 27, 'half Welsh, half Irish, born at Bournemouth', went to St. Paul's School, and was subsequently news reporter on the *Swindon Advertiser* and *Derby Telegraph*. In the R.A.F. has published short stories, novels under the name 'Patrick Owen' and a book of verse, *Patterns and Poems*, under his own name. In Burma he edited *The Jungle Times* for the 14th Army and his Group.

MURIEL MARGARET WASI has published verse, articles, reviews, and short stories—until recently under her maiden name of Muriel da Costa. She was educated at Madras University (where she headed the lists for her year) and at Oxford. She was Assistant Professor at the Maharani's College, Mysore until 1942, when she entered the Public Relations Directorate as a member of the W.A.C.(I).

KEITH WATSON is in the Public Relations Office, Bombay. He is assistant editor of *The Journal of the Air Forces* and *The Royal Indian Air Force Journal*, but is due to return to England in the near future. Besides contributing cartoons and sketches to various periodicals, he has written and published prose of different types as well as verse.

ARCHIBALD PERCIVAL WAVELL. H.E. the Viceroy, Field Marshal Lord Wavell, has been outstanding as a soldier, a statesman, and a man of letters. His campaign in North Africa astonished the world. In India his vigorous attack, first on the famine situation and then on the constitutional deadlock, favourably impressed even the most determined critics of Britain. His books, from *Generals and General-*

ship to Other Men's Flowers, have reflected the shrewdness, distinction, and versatility of his mind.

PAUL FREDERIC WIDDOWS was born in London in 1918 and educated at Repton and Hertford College, Oxford. He went straight from Oxford into the army and has served in India for about four years.

RONALD P. WILCOCK is a textile operative, a Trade Union worker, and a political lecturer who has served in India with the Royal Army Service Corps. Has written political articles for the *Trade Union Journal* and also for local papers. He describes himself further as 'an unsuccessful short-story writer and a member of the Forces Writer Circle'.

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